

## In the Aftermath – Chapter 10

“Tell the machineguns to hold their fire,” I yelled. “No grenades either, the cops are coming.”

The people we were fighting with turned their attention to the San Bernardino Sheriff’s Deputies. That would be just what we needed, getting arrested for the NFA firearms. I slipped into the house and deposited my Tac-50, replacing it with a shotgun. It wasn’t long before the fire died down; the people down the road must have heard the sirens too. How do you hide a Ma Deuce? I guess you take it off the pintle and stow it in the Hummer. A couple of the others collected weapons and dumped them in the house, returning with an assortment of hunting rifles and shotguns. Jose was busy policing brass. Everybody was awake and must have heard the sirens; they came out carrying the cowboy guns, shotguns or something else legal.

“What’s going down?” Gunny asked.

“We had a slow moving van coming down the streets with the lights out. I put a round in the windshield and they came up firing. When I heard the sirens, we ditched the heavy weapons.”

“Know who they are?”

“Nope. I shot one who looked like he had a M16 and another had a grenade. You should have heard the explosion.”

“I thought I was back in Beirut.” (October 23, 1983 at 6:22am)

The shootout down the street didn’t last long as Deputies flooded the area. I estimated there had been 7 people in the van, but I didn’t know if they were all men. This wasn’t North Hollywood and it wasn’t 1997. SWAT had plates and some serious firepower. I wouldn’t be a bit surprised if they weren’t using M855 in their semi-auto M16s. The Deputies, I mean. Only God knows what the SWAT Team used. No one said, but I’d be willing to guess that their orders were shoot to kill. They finished up and several Deputies began to check the bodies. Four of them walked our way, examining the ground as they approached.

“What did you use to take out that windshield?”

“12-gauge sabot. Left one hell of a hole.”

They looked around and saw the hunting rifles and shotguns. Then they started looking closer at the shotgun, checking for a rifled barrel. That’s what Gunny was carrying.

“This gun smells clean.”

“You don’t say,” Gunny chuckled, pulling a clean rod with a dirty patch soaked in Hoppes out of the barrel of his shotgun.

“Do you always clean your guns right after you use them?”

“Rust is the enemy of a good firearm.”

The Deputies interviewed a few neighbors who were out of their houses. They all confirmed that the first shot they heard came from the area of the van. I didn’t know it at the time, but some of the ladies were busy moving certain items from the living room to the shelter and then locked up after themselves. Rose came up to me and asked, “Are you ok?”

“Never better, Rose. Looks like I might have been wrong.”

“Wait, I’ll get my tape recorder and you can repeat what you just said,” she said giving me a peck on the cheek.

Gunny came over after visiting with Jose. He smirked and asked, “Recon by fire?”

“Is that what they call it when you shoot first, Gunny?”

“I screwed up; I didn’t get us any night vision.”

“Oversight, Gunny?”

“Didn’t even occur to me. I must be getting old. Old gives you 2 things, experience and a bad memory.”

“You aren’t any older than we are. Fortunately, I have night vision scopes on both of the sniper rifles.”

“So it begins. The trouble I mean,” he observed.

“They could have just been burglars scoping out the neighborhood looking for an easy score.”

“Right, with M16s and hand grenades. I’ll get around and head out later this morning. We’ve got to have some night vision equipment.”

I asked a Deputy who the people in the van were but he shrugged his shoulders and walked off. Nothing like a little firefright at 1am to wake you up. I don’t think they were buying our having shot the van into a piece of Swiss cheese with nothing more than a few shotguns and hunting rifles. They asked Seth and searched the house, finding nothing. One Deputy observed, “The last time I saw a vehicle that looked like that was in Iraq after we’d hit it with a Ma Deuce.”

“A what?”

“M2HB, .50 caliber machinegun.”

“Oh, the guns they used to use on airplanes,” I replied.

“Air Force?”

“20 years.”

“You tell the guy with the cleaning rod to be sure and clean his machinegun.”

“Sure.”

“What’s with all the trenches? They look like fighting positions.”

“Not bad for a couple of Airdales, huh? Do you know who was in the van? The other Deputy shrugged his shoulders?”

“No IDs, yet, they were all Hispanic. Could be a Chicano gang or MS-13.”

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Seth talked until morning with Gunny. They seemed to reach some sort of agreement and when Gunny left to go shopping, Seth left to do the same. When my shift ended, I crawled into bed and was still sleeping when they both returned. With Rose having the day shift and me having the graveyard, I ended up making myself a bowl of cereal. I understood Gunny’s logic, but a couple should be on adjacent shifts. That way they could get some sleep after playing Doctor and Nurse.

“Install these suppressors on the M16s, M240s and the Ma Deuce,” Seth instructed.

“Even suppressed, the 50 cal is going to be noisy, Seth,” I told him.

“We’re going to reserve the heavy machinegun for last ditch defense. I heard you talking to that Deputy and I don’t think he was fooled.”

“Gunny did you get night vision for everyone?”

“Not for everyone, but enough for the duty shift. And I got the CCTV cameras you wanted. I couldn’t get the A3s or A4s, but the A2E4s have removable carrying handles so I picked up M68 Aimpoint Sight Systems for all of the M16s.”

“If figured that everyone ignored me when I suggested the CCTV cameras.”

“Other things were higher priority,” Seth replied.

“If we had day and night vision CCTV cameras, we’d only need to have the group up, we wouldn’t have to sit out in the cold, when it gets cold,” I retorted.

“I also picked up two more of those Kenwood AREC kits, and most everyone will have radios.”

“As long as we’re making changes, how about putting couples on adjacent shifts?”

“I’ll take care of that,” Gunny offered.

“So was what happened last night a fluke, or do you think it is the beginning of a trend?” I asked.

“What’s the difference, Airdale, it worked out ok?”

“Sure it did, that’s why we’re not going to use the heavy machinegun except as a last resort defense.”

“We aren’t going to use any of the machineguns except as a last resort and the same goes for the 40mm grenades and the hand grenades.”

“Where do I draw my bow and arrows?” I asked.

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“I think you pissed Seth off,” Rose suggested.

“Rose, what is the point of having the tools we need to do the job if we can’t use them?”

“Naomi said that Seth was going down to San Bernardino and talk to the Sheriff.”

“Who is the Sheriff?”

“A man named Gary Penrod.”

“Who was that tall Deputy you were talking to?”

“I don’t know. His name was Douglas, Jack Douglas. Big sucker wasn’t he?”

Note: If you want to know more about Deputy Jack Douglas, read, ‘Big John’.

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Monday, August 6, 2007...

“It was a shame you couldn’t get some of those SAWs, Gunny.”

“Joe, my friend says that they have a new shipment on order. I told Seth and when he got the suppressors, he got 4 for SAWs. That’s the best time to get them anyway, when they’re getting in a large shipment.”

“I didn’t know that Surefire made a suppressor for the 5.56 machinegun. I thought that all they had were 7.62 machinegun suppressors.”

“You’re right, but the life of the 5.56 can is 30,000 rounds, guaranteed. Surefire claims that they’ve never worn one out. The only thing lacking was a fast attach mount for the M249.”

“So?”

“So Seth got some of the 5.56 cans and knows someone in San Bernardino who can manufacture the mounts. He was going to talk to the guy when he went down to see the Sheriff.”

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The troops were home now, so it didn’t matter. Seth went to see the Sheriff and see about getting Fast Attach adapters built for the M249 SAWs. I worked with Gunny and we finally got the list revised so every family had family members on consecutive shifts. It hadn’t been that long since Gunny had joined up, but any differences had long been overcome. I hate to tell you this, but Gunnery Sergeants put their pants on one leg at a time too. What they have going for them is that mystical thing money can’t buy, experience. If they have wings, they aren’t Angel’s wings.

This was a whole different can of worms here in Lake Arrowhead. We were attempting to defend what amounted to a fixed fortification and we all know what George S. Patton said about fixed fortifications, they were monuments to man’s stupidity. If you had told me at dinner time the previous evening that crap like what happened this morning was coming, I wouldn’t have believed you. If we couldn’t use the machineguns or any explosives to defend the place, we were in trouble.

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Remember how I blamed the environmentalist for our troubles? Three environmental groups sued the federal government, seeking to protect polar bears from extinction because of disappearing Arctic sea ice. The lawsuit, filed in federal court in San Francisco, demands that the government take action on a petition environmentalists filed earlier to have polar bears listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act. There is no firm count of polar bears, and the lawsuit did not indicate how many may have been lost

because of retreating ice. I suppose they wanted us to take our remaining electricity and run a big air conditioner to cool off the air.

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“Gunny, why do you think we were attacked?”

“Who shot first?”

“I did.”

“It sounds to me like they were defending themselves. Who told you to do a recon by fire?”

“Jose.”

“He didn’t have night vision, how did he know who was in the van?”

“I gave him readouts of what I was seeing through my night vision scope.”

“I see. Let me tell you about Recon by Fire. In a recon by fire, a recon element places direct/indirect fire on positions where there is a reasonable suspicion of enemy occupation. The goal is to cause an enemy to disclose his presence by moving or returning fire. Recon elements conduct a recon by fire when enemy contact is expected and time is limited or when they cannot maneuver to develop the situation. This method eliminates any element of surprise the scouts may have had, and it is likely to give the enemy detailed knowledge of their location. However, it may reduce the chance of being ambushed within established kill zones. Recon by fire does not work in all cases. For example, disciplined troops in prepared positions will not react to the scout’s fires.”

“I...”

“I’m not done, Joe. When evidence exists, the scouts should maneuver to observe from different directions. When the decision is finally made to conduct a recon by fire, weapons should be used in the following priority: Indirect fire; Dismounted machine gun; 25-millimeter (mm) chain gun, Mk 19, and mounted machine gun; and, Tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided missile (TOW).”

“Why don’t you put Jose in charge of the graveyard shift?”

“You wouldn’t mind?”

“The shift Leader is the one with his chest in the wringer if a mistake is made. I deferred to Jose anyway. A Marine Corp Staff Sergeant is an E-6 only one grade lower than I was and, I don’t have any combat experience. I’ll stay on the graveyard shift because Rose is on 2nd shift, but I really rather just be the designated sniper.”

“Ooh-rah, Joe. Jose and you can switch roles and you can advise him.”

Definition: “It’s an affirmation that I fully agree with and support the idea or intent expressed by the person to whom I make that response,” said Maj. Gen. F.A. Gorden, Military District of Washington commander. “It applies not only to the letter of what was said, but to the spirit of what was said.” You can hear it shouted by Air Force Security Forces, Pararescue, and Combat Controllers. The word is thundered out by Navy SEALs, and by United States Marines (who pronounce it “Ooh-Rah!”).

I guess I was learning a new language, the language of Marines. Can’t you just see a couple of Airman saying, Hooah if they got the bombs attached to the F-15 without blowing it up? Pararescue, I could see, but not the average Airman. I only fired a couple of shots, and for sure had only taken out one of the people with the van. I still didn’t know if the driver was a man or woman, they all wear their hair the same length.

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“Rose, there is dinner in the oven and there’s enough for the entire 2nd shift. By the way, Jose is 3rd shift leader.”

“I thought you were.”

“I worked it out with Gunny and Jose and I switched positions. It only makes sense, Jose was a combat soldier, and I wasn’t.”

“Whatever you say, Joe. Hey, let’s be careful out there, now you know that there are bad guys.”

“Us or them?”

“What do you mean?”

“I shot first.”

“It doesn’t matter, be careful.”

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“Gunny talk to you?” I asked.

“Sure Joe, but why did you dump it on me?”

“You’re the one who has the combat training and experience. I have no illusions about knowing how to handle combat. Did we get the suppressors and M68s installed?”

“We’re ready, but I doubt we have anyone show up tonight. Whomever they we hooked up with probably have no idea that they’re anything more than missing.”

“I don’t know, they had to know they came to Arrowhead.”

“Maybe, but there are dozens of streets they could have come down looking for, well, whatever they were looking for.”

“Maybe they were looking for us, Jose. We haven’t exactly kept the lowest profile.”

“What do you mean?”

“I used gold to pick up those 6 barrels of gas. The action last night must have drawn some attention. Sure, we have a good fire team with at least 20 we can count on, not counting the teenagers. What if they put 2 and 2 together and come back here? I didn’t hear what Seth worked out with the Sheriff, have you heard?”

“Only that we’re weapons free.”

“Who told you that?”

“Gunny, right after he talked to Seth.”

“In that case, I’ll put up Rose’s rifle and bring out the 50.”

“This will be our last night in the trenches, they have the cameras mounted and once they get the console set up, we can monitor from inside.”

“It’s still nice, it’s only August 7th. Winter doesn’t get here until October or November. This time of year, I’d be more worried about rain.”

“I thought that mostly happened in the spring.”

“When it’s raining down below during the winter, Lake Arrowhead gets snow. During warm weather they get rain.”

“The way you talk, you sound as if you don’t belong here, Joe.”

“I don’t. I should be up in the Antelope Valley, that’s where Evan and I live. You’ve seen my home and shelter and it’s defensible. Evan, Marie, Rose and I don’t add that much to the defense of this place.”

“Bull. Rose and you are snipers and Evan is a Team Leader. Don’t sell yourself short, Joe.”



“It doesn’t matter, we don’t have a choice. Seth shut the business down and Edwards locked out all of the civilians.”

“That won’t last, Joe. Once they complete the cleanup, Evan will have his job back.”

“Tell that to Seth, Jose, he still building up the defenses. It’s almost like he knows something that the rest of us don’t.”

“You haven’t talked to him to find out what the Sheriff had to say?”

“Didn’t have a chance. Makes you wonder, doesn’t it? He talks to the Sheriff and when he gets home, we’re weapons free. We’re not even supposed to have most of these weapons, they either violate the NFA, California law or both.”

“Something is going down, that’s for sure. The Sheriff’s office is big, 2,600 members.”

“San Bernardino County is the largest county in the contiguous US by area, containing more land than nine states. When you look at it that way, they’re understaffed.”

“Yeah, but most of it is desert.”

“And, San Bernardino County is infamous for its gang activity. The Inland Empire is well known for its Chicano gangs. The most well-known is the Onterio Varrio Sur Sunkist St Los B.A’s Black Angels OVS gang. Fueled by drug money and the ease of communication brought on by affordable cell phones, the street gangs have flourished and spread across and beyond the Inland Empire in the face of sporadic and ineffective law enforcement efforts and inadequate intervention strategies. Incidents of gang violence in San Bernardino County have increased since the 1960s, while at the same time growing more brutal. There are now an estimated 68,600 gang members in 287 gangs in the Inland Empire. Sergeant Phil Brown of the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department said the gangs are growing more violent in the farthest reaches of the county, including the High Desert. Racial tensions among the Chicano gangs and the Afro American gangs have heightened dramatically in the Inland Empire causing even the most rural areas to be affected. There’s more gang violence to the general public and it’s becoming more random.”

“So it could have been MS-13 or any one of 287 gangs?”

“Right, I think that’s why they had trouble identifying the guys last night.”

“Do the gangs work in concert?”

“Some do, that’s one of the reasons we might have a problem. If you do the math, the average gang has 239 members. The gangs are big on taking revenge, to protect their turf.”

We had strength in our number. There was Seth and Naomi, Evan and Marie and Rose and me in the beginning. We added 5 couples, 10 adults, with their 8 children. Finally we picked up Gunny and his wife, June or Joan, I can't remember. We had 18 adults and 6 teenagers, 3 ages 16 and up. We were as well armed as a couple of squads of Marines, possibly better. Medium and heavy machineguns weren't a part of a rifle squad. Instead, the average Platoon had 9 SAWs, possibly more. I saw where the Army or Marines had order 18,000 new barrels for the SAWs at \$12,000,000. You don't suppose it's the barrels that they're holding on with duct tape and cable ties do you?

## In the Aftermath – Chapter 11

The scheduled delivery date for the new barrels was 2010. What they should have done was order 18,000 new M249 SAWs, complete with spare barrels. Everything can't be a B-52 bomber with a projected life of 100 years. Apparently they built the SAWs at a plant in Columbia, SC. A few days later Gunny took off and came back with 3 new SAWs. It was his usual 4-hour trip. Three wasn't enough for 2 full squads, but we had the other machine guns. And, remember, we were weapons free.

"Those don't look right Gunny, what's the deal?"

"They're the para version. They were developed for special ops. They have a shorter barrel and a collapsing stock. Hey, it's what I could get, I can take them back. I can't get any of the Mk 46 Mod 0s, they're Special Ops only."

"Joe, quit giving Gunny a hard time," Seth suggested.

"What did you learn from the Sheriff? How come you came back and we're weapons free? Did they suddenly change the law?"

"Those were scouts for the BAs. They were looking for a few good neighborhoods to clean out. The Sheriff said that one of his Deputies told him that the van had been shot to shit with a Ma Deuce. I told him I wouldn't know; I was in the cabin. He also said that no one reported hearing a heavy machinegun firing. They can't supply enough Deputies to protect us, bottom line. On the way home I decided to go weapons free and just hide the guns after."

"What about the adapters to mount the cans on the M249s?" Gunny asked.

"I'll drive down below and pick them up." Seth announced.

"Someone unload the ammo from the back of my pickup," Gunny said.

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Monday, August 13, 2007...

"Rose, if you had ever told me I'd be huddled at a cabin in Lake Arrowhead with 25 other people waiting for the biggest Chicano gang in the Inland Empire to attack, I'd had said you were nuts."

"Can't the neighbors help out?"

"They don't want to get involved."

I should note that we had phones now, but still had to generate our own electricity. Edison was saying that it wouldn't be much longer before they had the power restored to the area. Gas hadn't been cut off, but Seth had been using propane from the beginning. The generators would burn either with a minor modification, but there was less energy in natural gas, hence less electricity. You could figure on 10kw out of a 12kw generator using natural gas.

The folks were getting tired of living in tents and I can't say that I blame them. The tents were just canvas, not Kevlar, hence not bulletproof. Apparently Seth had done more than visit with the Sheriff and order the adapters when he went to San Bernardino. Here comes this semi with grading equipment aboard, followed by another pair stacked high with some sort of panels.

"What's that?"

"A prefabricated steel building for the back lot." Seth smiled.

"Did you pull a building permit?"

"It's temporary. When this is all over, I can dismantle it and move it to Santa Clarita if we reopen Rim of the World."

"I thought you had closed the business down permanently, Seth."

"I did, but I might reopen it, later."

I let it pass, why argue with the boss? They unloaded the truck and began grading the entire back lot. Before they had finished, they were ready to set forms for concrete. Temporary? I looked at the prefabricated panels and they were cheap. This wasn't like Seth, to buy the bottom of the line of anything. Oh well, maybe it was all he could get.

On Tuesday they came in early, while I was still on guard duty, and set the forms. Around 10am, ready-mix trucks showed up and they poured a floor. I think the finish was what they call a light broom. By dark, the concrete was hard enough to walk on. I can tell you one thing, with a total of 6 machineguns and one sniper, those BAs had better think twice before they come here. The CCTV console was set up in the living room and that's where we were pulling guard duty now. Just because I hadn't mentioned it for a bit doesn't mean they had stopped working on the system.

On Wednesday and Thursday, they assembled the building. It wasn't that big, the lot was about 65' deep by 100'+ wide and the building didn't fill the entire lot. It's just that I should have paid closer attention, but with the graveyard shift, I slept through most of the day. I checked it out Thursday night after they left for the day and at this point they had a 40' x 80' building assembled, but empty.

"This is your answer to getting the people out of the tents?"

“Joe, were going to subdivide the building into six main spaces and put in 5 apartments that include 2 sleeping quarters and a bathroom. The sixth space will be a combined kitchen/dining room area that can double as a dayroom. Maybe it’s not fancy, but it’s functional.”

If you were to ask me, I’d bet that everyone just wanted to get back to his or her homes. If only I hadn’t fired that single shot in the middle of the windshield of the van, this could have all been avoided. Was this what that fella had meant when he was speaking of unintended consequences (I didn’t write it that way)? On Friday they were back and subdivided the building. I guess I really hadn’t paid much attention, Jose showed me their digs and they weren’t half-bad. Each apartment had a small bathroom with a shower and 2 other rooms, one for the parent’s and one for the kids. There was a 6-burner propane powered stove a pair of ovens and such in the kitchen area then the folding tables for eating and a TV off to one side. Nice.

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“When are they coming, Gunny?”

“Joe, half the secret to a good attack is getting your enemy to worry. They’ll pick the time and it will be to their advantage. I expect that they will only bring enough people to overwhelm us.”

“Why?”

“The Deputies are all on the lookout for large group of vehicles traveling together.”

“Do they have any idea how few we are in number?”

“It would depend on whether or not they’ve been doing recon. We don’t get many vehicles down the road, so if they’re doing it, they’re doing it from far off. We have everyone moved into the building and have pulled down the tents. I moved my travel trailer behind Seth’s garage to keep it out of the line of fire.”

“They could come in from the woods and surround us.”

“I’ve checked the perimeter and it’s about 500’. That will put about 25’ between each of us. Thank God you put in those fighting positions; they’re going to be our edge.”

“Do you really believe that 21 people can hold off a large gang?”

“We only have to hold them until the Sheriff can respond. The phones are back up and Seth has the Sheriff’s dispatch dialed in on his radio. We can’t communicate with their new 800 MHz equipment, but like most Sheriff’s Departments they keep the VHF up as backup.”

“Why didn’t the Sheriff just loan Seth one of the 800 MHz radios?”

“You’d have to ask Seth.”

So, I did.

“Why didn’t you get an 800 MHz radio from the Sheriff?”

“He’s short as it is and couldn’t spare one. I did get the VHF frequency and they monitor it just the same. That’s what most of their Reserve Deputies use. Does the new housing meet with your approval?”

“It’s actually quite nice, boss; functional but not elaborate. Got them out of the tents, anyway.”

“I believe that once the power is restored, things are going to settle down, Joe. Unless something else happens, that is. I’ve never believed in the rule that bad things happen in 3s. Do you?”

“Not particularly, no. We had the flu, a pair of earthquakes and then the terrorist attacks. That made 3 and the gang coming around jacked that to 4. If I did believe in such a thing, it would mean that we were in for 5 more events, once you get over 3, you go to 9 and then 27.”

“Nine, are you sure?”

“Hey, don’t blame me, I’m too young to have written that old wives tale, but the rule of 3s goes from 3 to 9.”

“I guess its good we don’t believe in it, huh? Which rule of 3s are we talking about here? There is one Rule of 3’s that says you can only survive 3 minutes without oxygen; 3 minutes in freezing water; 3 hours without shelter in extreme conditions; 3 days without water; and 3 weeks without food.”

“Oh, there’s the other one, bad things happen in three’s.”

“And, we’ve had 4?”

“Right, boss,” I told him. “It will all end when a rock comes in from behind the sun and zaps the planet.”

“You watch too many movies.”

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North Hollywood revisited: “A total of seven civilians and one dog were wounded. Eleven LAPD officers were injured, nine suffering gunshot wounds. Two of the eight damaged police vehicles were beyond repair. Sgt. Dean Haynes’s gun-blasted police car was donated to the LAPD Museum. ‘The rounds went right in one side and out the other,’ he said, ‘but no rounds penetrated the engine block, which I’m here to testify to. It’s absolutely a miracle, when you consider the number of rounds fired, that the suspects were the only people killed’.”

I guess it was a good thing they didn’t have armor piercing ammo, huh? The 5.56-mm ball M855 cartridge has a gilding, metal-jacketed, lead alloy core bullet with a steel penetrator. This is the NATO standard round. It is effective against personnel and light matériel, not vehicles. The new AP 5.56×45mm round being fielded is the M995. Chinese military-issue ammunition in this caliber is M67 style with a mild steel core and a thin jacket of copper or brass. Contrary to common belief, the use of steel was a cost saving measure rather than one to increase the penetration. Additionally, mild steel is not sufficiently hard to grant unusual armor penetrating capability. Despite this, Chinese ammunition is currently banned from importation in the US due to the fact that there are 7.62×39 mm caliber “handguns” and the ammunition is an “armor piercing handgun round” under the US federal legal definition of the word, which is based on materials and bullet design rather than on tested ability to penetrate armor. I don’t have any other data on the Chinese rounds, sorry. Here’s how the Ammoman describes SS109: Olympic .223 green tip (SS109), 62 grain – steel core, armor piercing penetrator core, boxer primed – non corrosive. Olympic ammo isn’t the best, avoid it, but SS109 will punch through metal and M855 is SS109. Anything else you want to know? Just call me Sergeant, I know nothing, Schultz.

On May 9th, 1980, Riverside County, California Sheriff’s Department received a report of a 211 in progress at the Security Pacific Bank on 4th and Hamner, in Norco, California. Deputy Glyn Bolasky was the first officer on scene. Deputy Bolasky was shot in the shoulder as five highly armed suspects exited the bank and attempted to get into their getaway vehicle, a green van. The gunmen were armed with automatic rifles, handguns, and improvised explosive devices (IED’s).

Deputy Bolasky, hurt and bleeding, shot and killed the driver of the van with his shotgun. The remaining four suspects exited the van and again shot at Deputy Bolasky, before stealing a pickup truck from the bank’s parking lot. Deputy Bolasky still managed to survive after being shot four times.

The suspects took off towards the foothills, leaving behind the \$20,000 they had attempted to steal. For the price of \$4,000 each, these criminals entered a bank, put the public in jeopardy and shot a Sheriff’s deputy. During the pursuit, the suspects fired their weapons and used the IED’s they had made to disable several of the pursuing officer’s cruisers. San Bernardino Sheriffs, California Highway Patrol, Fontana and Ontario Police assisted in the pursuit.

While traveling North on I-15, the gunman struck a San Bernardino helicopter with gunfire, forcing it to land and discontinue pursuit. Deputy James B. Evans, 39 years old, became the lead unit. The chase led onto Sierra Avenue towards Lytle Creek. Deputy Evans radioed to dispatch that he felt the gunman would wait around one of the curves for the units to appear. Deputy Evans requested for the helicopter to watch out for something like that.

A second San Bernardino Sheriff's helicopter tried to warn Evans that the gunman had set up an ambush, just as he had warned. The helicopter tried to raise Deputy Evans on the radio, but he did not have CLEMAR (California Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Radio) and could not hear the helicopter. As Deputy Evans rounded the curve, he was met with a barrage of gunfire. Deputy Evans was killed instantly when he was struck in the eye with a bullet.

Deputy McCarthy was following Deputy Evans. Deputy McCarthy shot back at the suspects with an assault rifle that he picked up from the station. The suspects fled into the woods and got away.

Three men surrendered on the morning of May 11th, and the LA Sheriff's Office SWAT Team shot the last suspect at large. Deputy Evans' family included his wife and their young child.

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When Lt. Col. Glyn Bolasky first heard the news of terrorists hijacking planes and crashing them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, the timing surprised him. The terrorist acts did not.

You cease to be shocked at such appalling acts after being shot five times in a rain of bullets.

Twenty-two years ago, Bolasky was a 24-year-old sheriff's deputy at the Riverside County, Calif., Sheriff's Department. On May 9, 1980 he was the first officer to arrive on the scene of a robbery in Norco, Calif. He faced five men who were heavily armed with automatic rifles and handguns, hollow-point bullets and homemade grenades.

During the shooting, the robbers killed one police officer and wounded eight, including Bolasky. They also shot up a police helicopter and damaged or destroyed 33 police cruisers.

The bank robbers fired more than 200 rounds at Bolasky's police cruiser, which sustained 47 bullet holes. Bolasky's body absorbed shrapnel in five places: the face, upper left shoulder, both forearms and the left elbow. The elbow wound proved to be the worst of the injuries as a bullet severed an artery.



Though badly wounded, Bolasky continued to perform his duty. He shot and killed one of the suspects. It was the first and last time he ever discharged his weapon in the line of duty, and the first time he had been shot at.

“When I got shot, I wasn’t a cop anymore,” he said. “I was a human being trying not to die. I went into a self-defense mode. It was a caveman mentality with only one thing in mind – survival.”

The four other suspects fled. The next day, police shot and killed a second suspect. Police captured the remaining three, who were later convicted of 46 felony counts and sentenced to life in prison without parole.

The Norco bank robbery has been described as one of the most violent in history. It’s used to train anti-terrorism agencies throughout the world.

Since the robbery, Bolasky, who is an electronic warfare officer with 12th Air Force at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., has talked about what happened that day to more than 6,000 people, including members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service and Sheriffs’ Departments around the country. He tells his story so others will learn.

“My attitude is that we always have to be ready; we never know what’s going to happen,” said Bolasky, who received the Sheriff’s Gold Heart – the equivalent of the military’s Purple Heart – and the Medal of Courage from his department and the Sheriff’s Association for his heroic actions that day.

He has traveled across the country, delivering seminars on responding to high-stress incidents and massive crime or accident scenes.

“As far as high-stress goes, Sept. 11 is as big as it gets,” Bolasky said. “I can’t say I was shocked at the magnitude. In my briefings, I’ve been saying for years this was coming. It was only a matter of time before something like this reached US soil.” Bolasky hopes the tragedy serves as an awakening.

“Making people believe something like terrorism can happen to them is the number one thing to overcome when trying to promote prevention and readiness,” he said. “Heck, even just a couple weeks before the Norco robbery, my supervisor was saying nothing ever happens around here.”

Bolasky made it his mission to make people realize it can happen in their communities. “It’s sort of like cancer,” he explained. “Everyone knows cancer is a problem. They read all the statistics. But until it happens to them, they always believe it’s something that happens to everyone else. So they don’t get regular checkups. They don’t alter their diets. They simply don’t believe it will happen to them.”

He says they take the same attitude with terrorism.

“Terrorism is also something that happens to the other guy,” he said. “People just don’t believe it’ll ever hit home.”

He admits that following Sept. 11 some of that invulnerability has changed.

“Today if you try to hijack an airliner in this country, the whole planeload of people is going to come after you,” he said. “What do they have to lose?”

But Bolasky says there are still things to overcome. One of those is communication.

“It’s amazing with all the technology today that agencies still can’t talk to each other,” he said. “It happened to us during the bank robbery. Different agencies were on different frequencies, and we couldn’t communicate with each other. A lot of the same problems exist today.”

For the average citizen, it’s less technical and more common sense.

Bolasky doesn’t preach paranoia. “It should still be fun to be an American,” he says. “But people should remain vigilant.”

“For one thing, you should pay attention to your surroundings,” he said. “I’m not talking a life-altering change. I’m just saying that if, for instance, you go to a convenience store and notice that there’s no one behind the counter, you might ask yourself why. Is something wrong? More than likely, the clerk is stocking shelves or something innocent. Then again, maybe he’s lying behind the counter with a gun to his head. It’s worth an extra minute or two to assess the situation, instead of walking into the middle of something you’re not prepared for.”

Another common sense tip is to carry a cell phone with emergency numbers.

“Or for military members, be proud of being in the military, but don’t necessarily flaunt it,” Bolasky said. “This has been the case overseas for a long time, but the fact is, why give a stranger more information about you than he needs?”

Bolasky said that you don’t have to be an anti-terrorism expert to make a difference.

“Military people get plenty of realistic training that will help them in a terrorist situation,” he said. “In a high-stress situation, we all revert back to the training we’ve had. That’s why it’s so important to train serious and hard. The brain works fast in a life or death situation, and you’ll recall things you were taught. Your training will give you the ability to assess situations quickly and make better decisions.”

In the end, it may help you avoid being a statistic on the 11 o clock news.

RELATED ARTICLE: Don’t be a victim

- Preplan. Don't be paranoid, but don't keep your head in the sand, either. Stuff does happen, and it's not always to the other person. Carry a cell phone and first aid kit. Have emergency numbers available. And know where the nearest hospital is located.
- Be aware of your surroundings. If something doesn't look or feel right, it may not be. Take a few extra minutes to assess situations before walking headfirst into trouble.
- Don't be a soft target. Soft targets are people who are careless or look like an easy mark by being sloppy with their appearance. Military members have the advantage here. They're usually more alert and project a more competent appearance by dressing sharply. These are deterrents that make them "hard targets."
- Train. This is especially important for military members, who practice emergency response exercises. Don't take this training for granted. Train seriously; train hard.
- Keep up with times. World affairs could make for a higher-risk climate.
- Assess areas you frequent. What makes a good target for terrorism? Anything that can garner national recognition. Military installations, nuclear facilities and universities are just a few examples of places that might become terrorist targets.

Lt. Col. Glyn Bolasky (I assume it's copyrighted by the author. But, I am good at research. Improvise. Adapt. Overcome.)

◦

Then again, you might get lucky:

A former MIT professor and multimillionaire businessman who has been praised for his riveting lectures but also known for his family disputes was ambushed outside his office and shot multiple times, authorities said Saturday.

John J. Donovan was taken to Massachusetts General Hospital after the shooting Friday night and later released, hospital spokesman Arch MacInnes said Saturday.

The 63-year-old founder of consulting firm Cambridge Executive Enterprises was shot several times, and it wasn't immediately clear why he wasn't more seriously injured, police spokesman Frank Pasquarello said.

He didn't know if Donovan was wearing a bulletproof vest but said a belt buckle may have helped saved his life. "There was something in his belt buckle – a bullet or a fragment," Pasquarello said.

Not everyone supported the US action in Iraq.

◦

We knew they were coming, we just didn't know when. Gunny had scored big on the 200-round magazines with the belted ammo for the SAWs. In years gone by, Americans were touted as Riflemen. That mostly applied to the Marines, these days. The ammo he

got was a 4 to 1 mix of M995 AP and M996, dim tracer. The problem with dim tracer was that it was designed for night vision and not all of the people here had night vision. The 5.56-mm tracer M996 cartridge is identified by an orange tip. The tracer is used for adjustments after observation, incendiary effects, and signaling. When tracer rounds are fired, they are mixed with ball ammunition in a ratio of four ball rounds to one tracer round. We'd have been better off with the M855 + M856 mix. We had the .50 cal for heavy duty fighting.

They say that you pay your money and you take your chances. When Seth was laying out all of the money for those suppressors, what he should have been doing was laying out money for more of those M107 rifles and plenty of the Mk 211 rounds.

It was a shame that they hadn't fielded the M307 yet that would have been the perfect machinegun to have. The XM307, in development with General Dynamics, is a light-weight, two-man portable machine gun that fires precision airbursting munitions. It is equipped with a target acquisition fire control sight and is the first automatic weapon to fire a 25mm thermobaric round at the intended range of 450 meters. Compared to the MK19 40mm grenade launcher that fires its rounds in a high arc, the XM307 fires on a flatter trajectory, boosting their velocity and letting Soldiers put three rounds on a target at 1,200 meters in the same time it takes the MK19 to send just one. [Project cancelled.]

The 50-pound XM307 is actually intended to replace two "old reliables" on the battlefield. One is the 84-pound M2 .50 caliber heavy machine gun, which weighs in at 128 pounds with its tripod. The other is the two decades-old MK19 Mod-3 40mm grenade machine gun, a popular choice for some vehicles that offers devastating suppressive fire capabilities. It weighs 79 pounds, or 137.5 pounds with its tripod. Some US Special Forces currently use a different, lighter (63 pounds, 107 pounds with tripod) 53 H&K 40mm GMG as a man-portable "ace in the hole" when serious firepower is called for, but the XM307 would offer a common replacement for all. [Project cancelled.]

## In the Aftermath – Chapter 12

quote(DID: We think he meant “Ma Deuce” - “Ma Duce” would be Mussolini’s mother...)  
end quote

Army leaders have concluded that the service’s current inventory of small arms is ill suited to the guerilla wars that US ground forces now are fighting.

The M16 5.56 mm assault rifle – the standard combat weapon for all services since the Vietnam War – is considered too long, with its 20-inch barrel, for close-in urban fighting. Many Army, Marine and special operations forces have adopted a shorter version of the M16, the M4 carbine, which has a barrel only 14.5 inches long.

Another factor is that infantry weapons are too difficult to maintain and repair, said Lt. Col. Mathew Clarke, product manager for individual weapons at Picatinny Arsenal, NJ.

“Today, if a barrel wears out, the weapon leaves the unit,” he explained. “You’re short until it is repaired. It could be days; it could be weeks, depending upon where it’s got to go and whether parts are available.”

The Army has been working to develop a so-called “objective individual combat weapon” to replace both the M16 and M4. The OICW is envisioned as two weapons in one, a rifle that fires a 5.56 mm round and a grenade launcher that expends a 20 mm air-bursting munition. A decade ago, the Army awarded a \$105 million contract to a team headed by ATK Integrated Defense, of Plymouth, MN. The venture included Heckler & Koch Defense Inc., of Sterling, VA, as the weapon’s designer and manufacturer.

The Army eventually concluded that the XM29—with inseparable rifle and grenade-launcher components—was too bulky and of limited utility, since not every soldier needs a grenade launcher. Thus, it was decided to develop the two elements separately. In 2002, the Army awarded a \$5 million contract modification to the ATK-HK team, calling for rapid development of the rifle component, which became known as the XM8 light-weight modular weapon system. Until recently, the Army planned to begin fielding it later this year.

The XM8 has been designed in four variants, Clarke said. These include a carbine, compact carbine, sharpshooter version and automatic rifle.

XM8 parts – such as the barrel, butt stock, magazine, sighting system and carrying handle – can be interchanged, he noted. Barrel lengths range from nine inches for a compact carbine to 20 inches for a sharpshooter rifle.

HK Defense produced 300 XM8s for testing, and the Army put them through their paces in a series of trials. The weapons have earned high marks, Clarke said.

“The final environmental test took place this winter in -53 degree weather at the Army’s Cold Regions Test Center at Fort Greeley, AK,” he said. “Fifteen to 20 soldiers fired 1,000 rounds each over two weeks. The weapons performed well under those conditions.” [Program cancelled.]

In the meantime, however, the Army Infantry Center at Fort Benning, GA, changed its requirements, Clarke said.

Instead of an automatic rifle, the Infantry Center wanted a light machine gun to replace the 5.56 mm M249 Squad Automatic Weapon. The center wanted the three rifle components – a carbine, special compact weapon and designated marksman rifle – to share at least 80 percent of the same parts, and the light machine gun at least 50 percent.

“With such a major change in the system’s concept, we felt we should put the project up for re-bidding,” Clarke said. A request for proposals was posted in May. Competitors have 180 days to respond. In addition to written submissions, they must provide four copies of each variant for testing.

“All of the major gun houses in the United States and many in Europe have shown interest,” he said.

“For us, the issue of a light machine gun is not a problem,” said Sal Fanelli, XM8 program manager at HK Defense. “Getting it to 50 percent commonality is going to be difficult, but we think we can do it.”

Colt Defense LLC, of West Hartford, CT, is going after the job. “Yes, absolutely, unquestionably,” said Kevin Brown, Colt’s government relations director. Colt designed both the M16 rifle and M4 carbine. It also produces a 9 mm submachine gun similar to the M16 and M4, as well as the M203 grenade launcher.

In 1988, Colt lost the contract for producing M16s for the military services to FN Manufacturing LLC, of Columbia, SC FN’s parent company, FN Herstal, of Liege, Belgium, is preparing its own proposal for the OICW, said Marvin Memmert, business unit manager for FN’s M16 and M249 programs.

“It will be something completely different from the M16,” he said. “It will be something along the lines of SCAR.” SCAR is the Special Forces combat-assault rifle – a family of 5.56 mm and 7.62 mm weapons with a grenade-launcher attachment – that FN Herstal is producing for the US Special Operations Command,

The process of evaluating the proposals and testing prototypes could take another year to 18 months, Clarke said. “The linchpin is going to be coming up with a system that is compatible with a light machine gun,” he said. “There are plenty of people out there who make a good 5.56 mm rifle.”

Meanwhile, “we’re still working the M4s,” he said. “We’re buying several thousand a month from Colt,” he said. “Also, we’ll probably buy a few more M16s to replace those that can’t be repaired. We have to maintain our current fleet while we develop a new one.”

At the same time, progress is being made toward fielding other weapons high on infantry shopping lists. In March, for example, the Army approved a new .50 caliber sniper rifle, the M107. “We’re in full-scale production,” said Peter Errante, deputy product manager for crew-served weapons. He declined to say how many weapons will be produced, adding only, “We’re making them as fast as we can.”

The M107 semi-automatic long-range sniper rifle, as it is known, is a commercial, off-the-shelf product based on the Marine Corps’ M82A3, Errante explained. “We made a lot of changes to improve durability and reliability.”

The M107 comes with two 10-round magazines; a variable-power day optic sight; a hard carrying case for storage, transportation and protection, and a soft case for tactical operations.

Like the M82A3, the M107 is made by Barrett Firearms Manufacturing Inc., of Murfreesboro, TN. Both are designed to target vehicles and aircraft at long distances. Although the M107 can be fired by an individual soldier using a bipod, it is considered a crew-served weapon because snipers work in teams of two, Errante said.

The rifle is big, nearly five feet in length, and heavy, with a weight of 32 pounds. It packs “a pretty significant recoil,” the backward motion of a discharged firearm, he admitted. In the hands of skilled snipers, however, it is extremely accurate, he said. “We’ve had confirmed kills at 3,500 meters in Afghanistan.”

The M107 can be placed on special operations’ ground mobility vehicles, Stryker’s and even unmanned ground vehicles. “It can be mounted facing to the rear of armored vehicles to keep enemy troops from approaching the vehicle from that direction,” Errante said.

An M107 atop an unmanned ground vehicle can be fired by remote control by an operator at a safe distance, Errante said.

A weapon developed “very quickly as an urgent operational requirement,” Clarke said, is the XM26 12 gauge modular accessory shotgun system. The Army already has shipped 199 of these weapons – made by C-More Systems, of Manassas, VA – to Afghanistan.

The XM26 attaches underneath the barrel of the M4 and M16, providing troops with the ability to fire lethal, non-lethal and door-breaching rounds, he explained. It also can be fitted with its own butt stock and used as a standalone shotgun.

Still another weapon getting considerable attention in infantry circles is the XM307 25 mm advanced crew-served machine gun. The XM307 is being developed by General Dynamics Armament and Technical Products, of Burlington, VT, under a 2004 contract worth up to \$95 million through December 2007.

The weapon fires 25 mm air bursting and armor-piercing munitions. Its fire-control system includes a laser range finder and a day-night sight.

The XM307 is intended to replace the two decades-old MK 19 40 mm grenade machine gun and the World War II-era M2 .50 caliber heavy machine gun, said Lt. Col. Kevin Stoddard, product manager for crew-served weapons. Within minutes, it can be converted to the XM312 lightweight .50 caliber machine gun. At 50 pounds, the XM312 is one-third the weight of the M2. The XM307 and XM312 share 95 percent of the same parts.

Both the XM307 and XM312 are being developed for use with the Army's Future Combat Systems, Stoddard explained. The service plans to have them in the hands of soldiers by fiscal year 2008, he said. (Programs cancelled.)

With the phone back up, the Internet was back up and I was checking to see what the progress was on some of those new weapons systems. It would really be nice if they were beyond the testing stages and available right now. That Chicano gang wouldn't stand a snowball's chance in Hell. It was only August, pushing September, of 2007 so I guess that meant that General Dynamics wasn't finished developing the weapon yet.

o

"Do I know you?" I teased.

"Evan Mace. We used to be friend's before we ended up on different shifts."

"I'm about ready to pack it in and head back to Lancaster, Evan."

"The money isn't good enough to get killed over, that's for sure," he agreed.

"What day is it, I've lost track?" I asked.

"Monday, August 20, Joe. Don't you just love the graveyard shift?"

"When is Labor Day?"

"Two weeks from today, why?"

"If that gang of Chicanos hasn't hit us by then, what say we boogie?"

"I'll pack my bag."



Evan was serious and, like me, was tired of the BS. If we beat feet and went home, we wouldn't have to worry about whether or not we had big enough guns, or enough. I still had the propane in my tank and if the electricity was off in Lancaster, I could run the generator and Evan and Marie could put up with us until the lights came back on. I envisioned myself as a survivalist, to an extent. If that meant leaving Lake Arrowhead ahead of a fight we might lose, so much the better. I'd allowed myself to be bought by Seth's gold, but it simply wasn't worth it.

"Seth, Evan and I have been talking. If the gang hasn't hit this place by Labor Day, they may not. We've decided that we're packing up and heading home. You have the 5 other families plus Gunny and his wife. You should be able to get most of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department here on short notice. Get that tall guy, Jack Douglas; he'd scare the crap out of anyone."

"They call him Big John. He already has a place in the hills somewhere."

"We'll stick for 2 more weeks, but then we're gone. Sorry Seth, but all of the gold in the world isn't worth being away from home."

"This is my two weeks' notice?"

"You could say that, yes."

"Fine, I'll pay the two of you off right now. You draw a year's supply of food for 4 and load it up. You can leave tomorrow."

"We'll start loading the barrels of gas on my Chevy."

"Let's go Evan, I told Seth and he had a real hissy. He said to draw a year's supply of food for 4 and leave tomorrow; he'd pay us off. Please help me load the gas aboard the Chevy."

"We'd better put half on the Chevy and half on my pickup, the gas is heavy."

"Suits me just fine. We'll find some diesel when we get back home, but fill your tanks."

Technically, the drums belonged to Seth, but there wasn't any other way to get the gas back to Lancaster. Evan and I were beginning to feel like we belonged to Seth so maybe that was the problem. I won't run from a fight and you know Evan by now. I had no idea if I had a job with Seth if he reopened Rim of the World. Maybe not and maybe he needed some competition up in the Antelope Valley. If Edwards continued to lock Evan out, I figured on talking to him.

o

“Tuesday, August 21, 2007...

We finished loading the supplies and Seth gave us our money. He didn't seem to be particularly upset. I promised to return the drums when I found something to store the gas in and he said not to worry about it. It seemed to be an amicable split. We weren't badly off. We had the gold from Seth's safe, our wages, gasoline and a year's supply of food for 4. Somewhere in the postal system, Evan had a severance check. It hadn't been at his house when he'd gotten their things after going to Edwards. Both of our homes were paid for, thanks to a tip from a Secretary who we knew at Edwards's years before. She explained that if you made double mortgage payments on a 30-year loan, your house would be paid for in 7 years. We had a small home loan to do some improvements, but I could pay that off.

We said goodbye to everyone and we were off. I took the lead in my Chevy with Rose and Marie in the middle in the Navigator and Evan bringing up the rear in his pickup. Seth gave us a pair of 2-meter mobiles as a parting gift. They weren't installed, because we didn't have antennas. We eased our way to Highway 138 and then struggled through the hills until we got to Phelan. After that, it was downhill all the way to Palmdale. We continued north on 47th east, it curves into 50th east, and made it to Avenue J and turned west. The stoplights were working, so you know what that means, electricity. We went to Evan and Marie's and unloaded their food. Marie reminds me of Carrie Fisher more than any other actress.

o

Did you see Carrie Fisher in that skimpy outfit in Episode VI? Carrie Fisher complained about her costumes in the previous two movies. She said they were so long, you could not tell “she was a woman”. Those complaints led to the skimpy outfit she wore as Jabba's prisoner. The costume became something of a running joke among the crew, because the metal framework that held the top together meant that the costume didn't move well with her. Since Fisher didn't like the industry standard solution of using double-sided tape, it became necessary before each take to have a wardrobe person check to ensure that her breasts were still snug inside the costume top. Rumors have circulated for years that she had an affair with Harrison Ford during the filming of the first Star Wars film. Both deny this, but Carrie has admitted in interviews that she had a crush on Ford and spent a lot of time with him off camera.

Carrie Fisher is a member of the Boy-Toy Club. According to Fisher, when an older woman plays around with a younger hunk in Hollywood, it doesn't just help to get your name back in the limelight, it helps you get into shape as well. “It's good for your weight,” she tells WENN.com. “It provides you with the illusion that something of charm and consequence is taking place in your life.”

The actress confessed that her recent fling with a 23-year-old made her feel better about herself and helped jumpstart a weight-loss program that has transformed her looks.

“He needed a place to stay,” the 46-year-old actress said. “He was beautiful and I suppose I did get a little infatuated with him. He was [messed] up about his mother, which made him flirty with me, and we ended up making out in my den and in his bedroom. And there was a tiny, tragic make-out thing in my car.” Of course, all this hot action brings a whole new meaning to “May the force be with you!”

◦

We didn’t feel like rats deserting a sinking ship, if you’re wondering. We were tired and just wanted to get back home. We unloaded the gas and food at our house and Evan left. I went down to the shelter to see what kind of mess they’d left while they’d been holed up after the 4th of July. It had been cleaned up good and the refrigerator was empty. The freezer was still about half full. The generator wasn’t running because the electricity was back on, but there was a note telling me they’d left it running when they’d left.

First things first, I called AmeriGas in Palmdale and told them I needed a refill. The generator also powered the house when the lights were out and the freezer in the house was still full. I doubt any of the fellas had even been in the house. It wasn’t long before the phone rang and it was Evan.

“Did you get your severance check?”

“They were holding our mail at the post office.”

“I have to go check; we didn’t have any mail either.”

“Is everything ok there?”

“Yeah, why?”

“The guy at the post office said that there had been some trouble up here.”

“What kind of trouble?”

“Gang trouble.”

“Did we go out of the frying pan and into the fire, Evan?”

◦

The area was used as hunting grounds for antelope, and as an escape route for marauding bandits. The story is that from 1882 to 1885, the valley lost 30,000 head of antelope, almost half of the antelope for which the Valley was named. Unusually heavy snows in both the mountains and the Valley floor drove the antelope toward their normal

feeding grounds in the eastern part of the Valley. Since they would not cross the rail-road tracks, many of them starved to death. Others were attacked by coyotes and wild-cats, or became easy prey for hunters. Palmdale got its name because early residents mistook Joshua trees for Palm trees and the city was first named Palmenthal. It was changed to Palmdale in 1899.

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“I don’t really know, Joe. Maybe the skinhead gangs will keep the Chicano gangs under control.”

“That will be fine if we don’t get involved.”

“Say what are you planning on doing for a living now?”

“I can’t say that I thought about it, do you have an idea?”

“Seth hasn’t reopened Rim of the World and there have to be people out there who need survival supplies. Seth never sold guns and I think we could open a shop here in Lancaster that sold a full line of survival supplies.”

“What do I know about selling survival supplies?”

“Someone has to run the gun store. With Los Angeles County making it so difficult to sell guns these days, it might be difficult to get all of the licenses, but we could try. Maybe we could work it with that place in Palmdale, High Desert Storm.”

“Why her?”

“Best prices in the Valley.”

“Could we compete with places like Big 5?”

“I don’t see why not. We can match their regular prices and if they have a sale, send our customers over there. What I had in mind was trying to get a foothold in the LEO market so we could carry a full line of products, if you get my drift.”

“Doesn’t the Gun Shop have that market cornered?”

“No more than Santa Fe Gun Galleria. Santa Fe carries all of the LEO leather and some accessories that the Gun Shop doesn’t. We can start small and run it out of a store front that I can rent, there’s plenty of empty stores in Lancaster.”

“How do you intend to fund this venture?”

“Sell the gold that I got from Seth.”

“What about business contacts?”

“I have my phonebook from Rim of the World.”

“Is that ethical?”

“He’s out of business, why not?”

“Hey, I heard that Costco was open.”

“Good, we can sell off those 4 one-year deluxe food supplies. Tomorrow, ride with me to Van Nuys and we’ll unload the gold. Then, we can get on the phone and start ordering supplies.”

◦

And thus was born AV Preparedness Supplies, a California Corporation based in Lancaster, California. We carry a full line of products, including guns. The first thousand went to a lawyer who sold us a corporate shell and his fee included filing the name change. The cost of the corporation was extra. I sold my 76 ounces of gold and Evan sold the 2 he’d earned. It went for around \$1,000 an ounce. I knew we were undercapitalized, but that was the extent of our money. Except, of course, that box of cash that Evan had dragged out of the closet. He had more than I thought and did the deposits on utilities, paid the lawyer, etc.

The corporation got the FFL with Evan and me as principals. Every dime we made was plowed back into the business that first year. We slowly began to build the inventory, thanks in part to sales and thanks in part to a loan from Wells Fargo Bank. Now we owed our souls to the company store, er, bank.

*Some people say a man is made outta mud  
A poor man’s made outta muscle and blood  
Muscle and blood and skin and bones  
A mind that’s a-weak and a back that’s strong*

*You load sixteen tons, what do you get?  
Another day older and deeper in debt  
Saint Peter don’t you call me ‘cause I can’t go  
I owe my soul to the company store*

*You tell ‘em Ern...*

*I was born one mornin’ when the sun didn’t shine  
I picked up my shovel and I walked to the mine  
I loaded sixteen tons of number nine coal*

*And the straw boss said "Well, a-bless my soul"*

*You load sixteen tons, what do you get?  
Another day older and deeper in debt  
Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go  
I owe my soul to the company store*

*I was born one mornin', it was drizzlin' rain  
Fightin' and trouble are my middle name  
I was raised in the canebrake\* by an ol' mama lion  
Cain't no-a high-toned woman make me walk the line*

*You load sixteen tons, what do you get?  
Another day older and deeper in debt  
Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go  
I owe my soul to the company store*

*If you see me comin', better step aside  
A lotta men didn't, a lotta men died  
One fist of iron, the other of steel  
If the right one don't a-get you, then the left one will*

*You load sixteen tons, what do you get?  
Another day older and deeper in debt  
Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go  
I owe my soul to the company store*

Sixteen Tons – 1955 – Tennessee Ernie Ford (now it's official). Since my daddy wasn't a coal miner and I'm not a girl, I don't know what number nine coal is, probably a grade. I found a reference to West Kentucky number nine coal, but that's it. Look it up yourself, if you want to know. The Western Kentucky No. 9 (Springfield) coal bed was the leading producer in western Kentucky (16 percent of total production in 1991).

It was tough times for a year or two and I never heard from Seth again until he reopened Rim of the World.

"So, you're my competition?"

"Sorry, boss, it seemed like the thing to do at the time. We don't have entirely the same line as you did so we can refer some of our customers if you still have the same line."

"What do you carry that I didn't?"

## In the Aftermath – Chapter 13

Ev'ry mornin' at the mine you could see him arrive  
He stood six foot six and weighed two forty five  
Kinda broad at the shoulder and narrow at the hip  
And everybody knew ya didn't give no lip to Big John.

Nobody seemed to know where John called home  
He just drifted into town and stayed all alone  
He didn't say much, kinda quiet and shy  
And if you spoke at all, you just said "Hi" to Big John.

Somebody said he came from New Orleans  
Where he got in a fight over a Cajun Queen  
And a crashin' blow from a huge right hand  
Sent a Loosiana fellow to the Promised Land-Big John  
(Big John, Big John) Big Bad John (Big John)

Then came the day at the bottom of the mine  
When a timber cracked and men started cryin'  
Miners were prayin' and hearts beat fast  
And everybody thought that they'd breathed their last-'cept John

Through the dust and the smoke of this man-made hell  
Walked a giant of a man that the miners knew well  
Grabbed a saggin' timber, gave out with a groan  
And like a giant oak tree he just stood there alone-Big John  
(Big John, Big John) Big Bad John (Big John)

And with all of his strength he gave a mighty shove  
Then a miner yelled out "There's a light up above!"  
And twenty men scrambled from a would-be grave  
Now there's only one left down there to save-Big John

With jacks and timbers they started back down  
Then came that rumble way down in the ground  
And then smoke and gas belched out of that mine  
Everybody knew it was the end of the line for Big John  
(Big John, Big John) Big Bad John (Big John)

Now they never reopened that worthless pit  
They just placed a marble stand in front of it  
These few words are written on that stand  
\*\*At the bottom of this mine lies a Hell of a man\*\* Big John (from the single)

Words and Music by Jimmy Dean

The lyrics to the sequel, Cajun Queen are in 'Big John'.

o

"Most importantly, we got a FFL and carry guns."

"I thought of that, but most of my business is mail order. I had to buy the server back from Eddie."

"Did the Black Angels ever show up?"

"You didn't hear?"

"Not one word."

"You weren't gone more than an hour when Gunny caught a glint off some optics in the hills. We figured we were being watched and got on the horn to the Sheriff. We went to condition Red while we were waiting, but they didn't attack. The Deputies showed up and arrested the entire bunch. It was one hell of a gunfight; and that was it we never heard another thing. We kept up our guard until the first anniversary of the terrorist attack and then I started looking at reopening Rim of the World."

"You were very lucky. What ever happened to Gunny?"

"He quit and went back home. Said he was tired of living out of his travel trailer."

"So what kept you from reopening sooner?"

"You were gone and had opened up a competing store. I didn't need the money, so I said to hell with it and went riding for the next year."

"Why did you decide to go back in business?"

"Couldn't sell the store and warehouse. So we dismantled the living quarters I erected on the back lot, moved them to Santa Clarita and started to rebuild the inventory. Except for you, I have the same crew. I promoted Jose to Assistant Manager."

"Good man. Say, you wouldn't happen to have Gunny's number would you?"

"I can give it to you, but he said he wasn't interested in working in preparedness supplies."

"I just wanted to say hi."

"If I get people wanting guns, I'll refer them."



“Fine and we’ll refer people looking for the one-year deluxe food supplies.” What? Bars frequently refer their drunk customers to first a cup of coffee and second to another bar.

What? You thought maybe Seth and I wouldn’t get along? I had nothing against Seth; it was that gold he had put back for me that had financed our business. And Seth was never one to carry a grudge. Our stores were only about 40 miles apart and now that he was open, we could quit carrying the Walton Feed stuff. I wanted to get into the Nitro-pak line.

They showed *Supervolcano* on TV last night. The eruption was 6,000mi<sup>3</sup> according to Tom Brokaw. The eruption 2.1 million years ago was only 585mi<sup>3</sup>, so this eruption was more than 10 times larger. They also showed *America’s Tsunami*. America’s Tsunami was the program they made after December 26, 2004 tsunami over in the Indian Ocean. Specifically, scientists point to the northwest region of the United States (northern California and coastal areas of Oregon and Washington) as being most at risk for a tsunami event because its fault lines are a mirror image of those in the Indian Ocean subduction zone. Scientists estimate that tsunami events happen every 200 to 400 years on the West Coast – the last occurred on January 26, 1700 – and with a fault line located just 50 miles off the coast along the Cascadia Subduction Zone, this region is thought to be the next target, with potential waves as high as 90 feet. Cascadia extends from northern California to the peninsula of British Columbia and is an exact mirror image geologically to the Indian Ocean subduction zone where the December 2004 tsunami occurred. Using new data and improved models from the expedition, scientists predict a tsunami three times the size of current estimates.

I was very happy about that, it was good for business. Yes, by now we had our own server, thanks to Eddie. It used the same software that Seth used at Rim of the World, but it contained a different inventory. We were getting inquiries about the one-year deluxe food packs so I called Seth.

“Seth, Joe. Say, people are asking about the one-year deluxe food packs, can you supply them?”

“I can try, Joe. It depends on whether or not I can get them. We have over 200 units on order just since they showed those programs last night. How many do you need?”

“I’d say we’ve had 50 or 60 calls. I can’t translate, but I’d say anywhere from 120 units to 180.”

“Three truckloads? Ah, hell, we’re talking about a total of 7 or 8 by the time we’re done. I don’t know if Walton can supply that much.”

“I steered some of them into the Nitro-pak and the Mountain House foods we carry, but our inventory isn’t very large. Some insisted on the stuff we used to carry, from Walton

Feed. We gave them your website and phone number. I'm just calling to give you a heads up, so you can call Idaho and get them busy shipping."

"I'll try, but 7 or 8 truckloads of food? I doubt they can supply that anytime soon. Those programs scared people really bad. I've had people asking for guns."

"We can supply them."

"California legal?"

"Did you ask something, Seth?"

"Oh, I get it."

"Not tonight, you don't."

"Huh?"

"A line out of *Heartbreak Ridge*."

"I was saying..."

"I know what you were saying and you were right, but don't pass it on."

"But how?"

"Buy them legal and buy the parts separately. What people do in their own homes isn't any of our business. We sell surplus ammo too. We're giving Eric the Ammoman a run for his money."

"Do you carry a full line?"

"Don't tell California or the feds." I warned.

"Did I ever tell you who supplied the suppressors?"

"No."

"I'll send you an email with his name and address. Be sure and tell him that you worked for me. He's a class III dealer. There won't be any other information in the email so if someone gets their hands on it, it won't mean anything."

"We're square on the shelter, right. Our putting in the one for you evened us up?"

"I can sell more."

“We can only handle about one a month, Seth; just give us the orders you can’t handle.”

When people wanted a shelter, they didn’t want to wait 6-9 months until it was installed. They wanted it up and running, yesterday because tomorrow might be too late. Since the terrorist attack on the July 4, 2007, California had abandoned nuclear energy altogether. The government, federal, state and local, had cleaned up after the terrorists and they were working on the reactor sites. It had only been a couple of years so they were still hot.

◦

Evan and I had tried to do it all by ourselves for too long. Marie and Rose worked with us, running the store and the computer. It was one of those 6am until we were done sort of operations. Store hours were 8am until 5pm. As soon as I hung up from talking to Seth, I called Gunny.

“Hey, you old war horse, this is Joe. What’s new?”

“Hey, Airdale, I heard the two of you started a preparedness business.”

“That’s why I’m calling, we need help.”

“I’m not interested in working in a store.”

“Not even a gun store?”

“I didn’t know you sold guns.”

“We do. I can’t really explain over the phone, but if you could get to Lancaster, you might really be impressed. If you come, I’ll buy you lunch and fill your tank.”

“How far is it from Santa Monica?”

“About 70 miles. It should take you a little over an hour.”

I’ll see you for lunch tomorrow, Airdale.”

◦

In between *Supervolcano* and *America’s Tsunami*, they showed actual footage from the Sumatra-Andaman earthquake, which caused the Indian Ocean Tsunami. The energy it contained was equal to 63,000 Hiroshima’s. Showing real footage, even it was from 5 years before was sure to get people’s attention. The *America’s Tsunami* show was about scientists looking for the cause of the 2004 quake. What I couldn’t understand was why they ran out of time. Having spent the amount of money they had, why couldn’t they just look until they found it? Probably wouldn’t have wooed the audience. I guess

I'm too cynical. Mud isn't 'hard' evidence. Mud is 'soft' evidence. They didn't have time to check the full length of what they found. Everything after they found the mud was a computer model. Apparently they don't teach in schools near the Indian Ocean that if the water leaves the beach suddenly, a tsunami is coming. With 20 minutes left out of a 2-hour program, they finally talked about the Cascadian Fault, for a few seconds. I could have told them that it was 'when', not 'if'. Sis did!

They gave an example of a M9.2 earthquake/subsidence on the Cascadian Subduction Zone that resulted in 5 minutes of shaking. Most of Seattle collapsed and a 50' wave hit followed by a 90' wave. When it happens, many of the evacuation areas, especially in Oregon, will be under water. I'm not worried; we're a long way from the ocean here in Lancaster. No Alfred E. Newman jokes allowed! Excuse me, I don't have time for this, we're getting hundreds of orders. The only problem I saw was that FEMA was involved. With Bush out of the White House, the Democrat President replaced Chertoff, there is a God! Discovery Channel finished off the evening entertainment with a program called *America's Volcanoes: Sitting on a Powder Keg*.

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"UPS took a truckload and it looks like they didn't take anything."

"Evan, we'll have them send another truck tomorrow morning. I talked to Gunny today, he's coming up tomorrow for lunch."

"To visit?"

"I thought I'd ask him to take over our gun operation."

"You want an outsider involved?"

"If he's part of the operation, he'll be an insider, won't he?"

"Sooner or later, someone is going to figure out that we aren't selling all of those guns to LEOs, Joe."

That was the interesting thing about the California law, almost everything was prohibited, but peace officers could own it all. We knew that Wal-Mart got in trouble with the state for not checking IDs or taking a thumbprint. We didn't make that mistake. And, if we didn't know you, all you could buy was California legal merchandise. They make a CA legal SA-58 and a CA legal AR-15, but they have fixed magazines holding 10 rounds. The state had inspected those models of guns and was satisfied that they couldn't be modified to accept the illegal high capacity magazines, easily. They didn't have any law we were aware of concerning parts kits and we sold one with every gun.

As a result of SB23 and since January 1, 2000, the definition of "assault weapon" also includes any of the following:

- (a)(1) A semiautomatic, centerfire rifle that has the capacity to accept a detachable magazine and any one of the following:
  - (A) A pistol grip that protrudes conspicuously beneath the action of the weapon.
  - (B) A thumbhole stock.
  - (C) A folding or telescoping stock.
  - (D) A grenade launcher or flare launcher.
  - (E) A flash suppressor.
  - (F) A forward pistol grip.
- (2) A semiautomatic, centerfire rifle that has a fixed magazine with the capacity to accept more than 10 rounds.
- (3) A semiautomatic, centerfire rifle that has an overall length of less than 30 inches.
- (4) A semiautomatic pistol that has the capacity to accept a detachable magazine and any one of the following:
  - (A) A threaded barrel, capable of accepting a flash suppressor, forward handgrip, or silencer.
  - (B) A second handgrip.
  - (C) A shroud that is attached to, or partially or completely encircles, the barrel that allows the bearer to fire the weapon without burning his or her hand, except a slide that encloses the barrel.
  - (D) The capacity to accept a detachable magazine at some location outside of the pistol grip.
- (5) A semiautomatic pistol with a fixed magazine that has the capacity to accept more than 10 rounds.
- (6) A semiautomatic shotgun that has both of the following:
  - (A) A folding or telescoping stock.
  - (B) A pistol grip that protrudes conspicuously beneath the action of the weapon, thumbhole stock, or vertical handgrip.
- (7) A semiautomatic shotgun that has the ability to accept a detachable magazine.
- (8) Any shotgun with a revolving cylinder.
- (b) "Assault weapon" does not include any antique firearm.
- (c) The following definitions shall apply under this section:
  - (1) "Magazine" shall mean any ammunition-feeding device.
  - (2) "Capacity to accept more than 10 rounds" shall mean capable of accommodating more than 10 rounds, but shall not be construed to include a feeding device that has been permanently altered so that it cannot accommodate more than 10 rounds.
  - (3) "Antique firearm" means any firearm manufactured prior to January 1, 1899. Firearms that fit the above descriptions which were possessed on December 31, 1999 can be kept if they are registered between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2000. Firearms that are on the Roberti-Roos list, but not currently validly registered, cannot now be registered.

Effective January 1, 2002, a peace officer member of the Department of Justice, police departments, sheriffs' offices, marshals' offices, the Youth and Adult Corrections Agency, the Department of the California Highway Patrol, district attorneys' offices, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Parks and Recreation, or the military or naval

forces of this state or of the United States, or any federal law enforcement agency, who possesses or receives an assault weapon prior to January 1, 2002, may, with the authorization of his or her agency, retain and personally possess of that firearm provided he or she registers it as an assault weapon with the Department of Justice on or before April 1, 2002. Such a peace officer may also, with the authorization of his or her agency, personally purchase or receive an assault weapon on or after January 1, 2002, provided he or she registers it as an assault weapon with the Department of Justice within 90 days after possession or receipt. Assault weapon registration forms are available from the Department of Justice and may be obtained by calling (916) 227 3694. It seemed the burden of reporting an assault weapon purchase was on the LEO.

And, capable of accepting more rounds only require a magazine block. We only sold pre-ban magazines anyway and so far, we hadn't had any trouble. The way I read the law, most of the semi-automatic handguns were illegal, you could drive to Lost Wages, Reno or Arizona and buy high capacity magazines. You could get a family member in another state to accept delivery and forward them to you. All of our sales receipts showed California legal 10-round magazines.

o

We worked to midnight packing the orders and planned to take off an hour or two to visiting with Gunny. There was nothing that said we couldn't shut down the business for a couple of hours to have lunch with Gunny and give him the pitch. Evan and I were full partners and we agreed to give Gunny the same deal if he would take over our firearms operation. Our number one seller was the SA M1A standard model rifle with the California muzzled brake. We had flashhiders with bayonet lugs as a separate item and a very large quantity of 20-round M1A magazines with a 10-round block. Our most popular ammo in 7.62 and 5.56 were the Lake City overruns packed loose. Ammoman seemed to have cornered the market on the stripper clip M855 in the bandoleers, but more was coming on the market.

"How are you doing you old fart?" Evan asked.

"Been lifting boxes, I see."

"Feeling like trying again?" Evan asked.

"Testy today, aren't we?"

"Give the waitress your order and let's get down to business."

"I'll have the New York Strip, medium rare, and fries. You can bring a touch of the good stuff, JD on the rocks."

"What the hell, if that's the way he wanted to handle the meeting we might all have a beer (or two)."

“Gunny we have two kinds of firearms and accessories. California legal and LEO only weapons. We’ve developed an accessory pack to convert the CA legal to LEO only, but we only sell those to people we know. Evan and I discussed it last night and if you’re in, we’ll make you a full partner in the corporation. You have the same number of shares as Evan and I have.”

“How many shares do your wives own?”

“The same, but they work fulltime in the business.”

“So what you’re offering is a 20% share in a going business. How profitable is it?”

“To date, we’ve plowed all of the profits we could back into the business. Our inventory isn’t as large as Seth’s, but we’re getting there. Anything a gun customer wants that we don’t carry gets referred, first to High Desert Storm, then to the Gun Shop and finally Santa Fe Gun Galleria. The Gun Shop has the largest selection and High Desert the best prices. Santa Fe is the highest priced and concentrates on LEO arms. But they have a large selection of Kimbers and Browning Hi-Powers. They carry the Parkerized police model Remington shotguns too. We keep an eye on Big 5 and when they run sales, refer shotgun customers there if the gun they want is on sale.”

“How do you make any money?”

“The main thing, we’ve found, is a satisfied customer. We don’t directly compete with Seth, and refer a lot of people to him. We’re doing something right, we were working to midnight packing orders.”

“Why the sudden sales, or is that normal?”

“Discover Channel ran 4 back-to-back specials Sunday night.”

“I saw those. I can see why business is good.”

“We also have a deal with a contractor to install a 10’x50’ shelter; identical to the one Seth sells. We have a deal with Harbor Freight for generators. They install them and we get a cut. That helps keep the inventory down.”

“You have a demo?”

“In my back yard.”

“I’d like to see that,” Gunny replied.

“We can check it out after lunch. Say, is your wife’s name Joan or June?”

“Judy.”

“Well, what do you think of the offer?”

“Sounds good. We could sell our home and buy the same thing up here and have money left over, I checked. We won't tell anyone that I'm working for a couple of Airdales.”

“With, Gunny, not for.”

“I suppose you want me to use my sources to get some heavy artillery, right?”

“Maybe eventually we might get some of the Barrett's for our personal use only.”

“It's easier to get now, they finally got the price down to \$22 per round for the HEAB and less for the AP.”

When I got back, there was a call from the contractor. He was offering to install up to 3 of the shelters a month. Good news, so I called the fabricator and told him we needed one shelter finished every 10 days for the next 3 months. Selling preparedness supplies is an on-again/off-again business. Something happens that scares the public and you think it's the end of the world for a few weeks. Then they forget all about what got them excited and things get back to normal. Still on the phone, I order a truckload of the Nitropak/Mountain House food packages.

Our shelters only came one way, what you might call the deluxe model with kitchenette, black water tank, 12k/10k generator, depending on fuel source, and a water tank. Our contractor dug the hole, set the shelter, installed the extras and did the landscaping. Installation was extra and paid directly by the purchaser. As a convenience to our customers, we kept several of the Radmeters4U packages on hand with extra dosimeters and KIO<sub>3</sub>. That was an easy sell after the terrorist attack.

o

A 90' wall of water and an evacuation area only 40' above sea level? I guess they did that so you could watch the tsunami coming towards you. When it happened, a lot of people were going to die; there was no way they could evacuate in time. And earlier, on *Supervolcano*, Bozeman, Montana was under 20' of ash? Depending who you listened to, the magma pool under Yellowstone was anywhere from 4,000km<sup>3</sup> to 25,000km<sup>3</sup>. That flat spot they talked about in the program is called the Snake River Plain and it shows the movement of the crust over the magma chamber. The simple truth is that they either don't know the size of the magma chamber or it changes from time-to-time. Whatever, it was good for sales.



## In the Aftermath – Chapter 14

I get a call from 3 nincompoops from Palmdale who each wanted a shelter and it's a package deal. One guy says the contractor will have to dynamite out his swimming pool to make room and the second only lives about a mile from the San Andreas. The third guy is in a wheelchair and there is no way to get access to his backyard. The 3 of them seem to think it's time for the end of the world or something. Money is money and we don't discriminate so I sell them each a shelter and throw in the radiation meter set. They were talking about Barstow like it was their private shopping spot. Which reminds me, I need to talk to Gunny about those M107s and ammo.

The guy in the wheelchair seems to think you can live on beans and rice so I make sure Rose sells him plenty of Beano. He wants to know about buying a M1A, Loaded model, with a real flashhider. He asks a few other questions and I sic Gunny on him. Acts like he just won the Lotto and ends up buying a Super Match with accessories, if you know what I mean. He gets the compensator adapter for the rifle so I suppose that he thinks that somehow makes it legal to own in California. He buys his wife a LEO only AC-556 and the M4-FA. Says he knows a good gunsmith who can make the repairs and restore the rifle to its intended configuration. The old men buy 90 7.62 magazines and say they're going to divide them up. Gunny shows them how to remove the bottom plate from the magazine so they can remove the hunk of wood.

I figure having a shelter 1 mile from the San Andreas Fault must mean that you like to ride roller coasters, but that tall, thin black fella just smiles. I catch the names, Clarence, asshole and Gar-Bear. Strange! Their last names were Floyd, Brown and Aught.

o

Sales were good right up to late August 2009. Then I suppose people were spending money on Christmas and they sort of flattened out. Wait, it's not PC to call it Christmas anymore, is it? BS, Seth and Naomi celebrate Christmas and they're Jewish. It's all a merchandising scam anyway; the days they set aside to celebrate His birth in December are an old pagan holiday.

Historians are unsure exactly when Christians first began celebrating the Nativity of Christ. At times it was forbidden by the Protestant Church until after the 1800s, because of its original, pagan rituals. Some scholars maintain that December 25 was only adopted in the 4th century as a Christian holiday after Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity on his death bed, to encourage a common religious festival for both Christians and Pagans. Perusal of historical records indicates that the first mention of such a feast in Constantinople (Constantine's own city, after all) was not until 379 AD, under Gregory of Nazianzus. In Rome, it can only be confirmed as being mentioned in a document from approximately 350 AD, but without any mention of sanction by Emperor Constantine.

Early Christians chiefly celebrated the subsequent Epiphany, when the baby Jesus was visited by the Magi (and this is still a primary time for celebration in Spain). Efforts to assign a date for His birth, though better known from writings from some centuries later, would have been important to all Christians then, no less than now. The guy in the wheelchair said the shelter was his Christmas present and he defined Christmas as the time of the year you spend money you don't have on things you don't need.

"Gunny, what have you been able to do on the M107s?"

"I got 3. Expensive puppies. I picked up some of the Raufoss and A-MAX for the 50s, too."

"You like your new house?"

"Yeah but there's one problem."

"What's that?"

"I live right next door to you."

"That's ok, we got the freezers restocked so Judy and you can come over for steaks."

"Invite Evan, Marie looks just like Carrie Fisher."

"Evan might get pissed with you gawking at his wife."

"Just window shopping, Airdale."

"Let me tell you about grass, Gunny. The grass on the other side of the fence is always greener. But it's filled with rocks, barbed wire, broken glass and snakes."

"How tall is she?"

"Carrie Fisher or Marie?"

"Take your pick."

"They're both 5'1" and neither publishes her measurements. Rose cautioned me about Marie and I hadn't even looked."

We decided to have the cookout on Labor Day. I had a friend bring in a couple of cases of real Canadian beer, the 8% stuff. Labor Day in 2009 was still on a Monday, but this year it was September 7th. To satisfy the full spectrum of consumer tastes, the Carling Black Label family now includes Black Label, Black Light and Black Dry, which are complemented by a selection of beers with a higher alcohol content (from 5.9% to 10%) available in economical 1.18-litre bottles. 2 cases! Molson owned the brand and they

now owned Coors. Didn't know that? Yeah, that happened in February 2005. It's a shame that those puritans in Washington won't allow the US to import real German beer. That's the knock your socks off stuff. Scope had more alcohol in it than the German beer they did import.

o

"So, Gunny, how much ammo did you actually get?"

"1,000 rounds of the Hornady and 1,000 rounds per in the Raufoss. I upgraded the M107 and installed MUNS night vision and a Nightforce NXS 8-32x56mm variable day scope with BORS."

"How did you get around the California ban on .50 caliber weapons?"

"LEO purchases."

"What did you set up so we won't get busted?"

"We sell California legal only, except to LEOs. I sell the conversion stuff out of my house and run it through the business in the miscellaneous account. Same rules apply, if one of us doesn't know them, I don't sell to them."

"What about those old geezers from Palmdale?"

"The guy in the wheelchair was an Airdale, he called Edwards, 'Eddie's Airplane Patch' and said he was stationed there from '62-'65. Said he hated the desert."

"Why is he living in Palmdale?"

"He thinks he picked up a virus or infection and it got into his blood."

"What's wrong with him? Why the Wheelchair?"

"Diabetes, I guess; I can't remember, the list was long. The other two have bad hearts. He said he gets his exercise by scrolling up and down his inbox for his email and by writing survivalist fiction."

I am pleased to report that Labor Day went off without a hitch. We only managed to drink one case of the Carling Black Label beer; it was simply far too strong. It was cold for a Labor Day in the Antelope Valley, but not too cold to enjoy the day. It was actually a rather pleasant high '70s. So that evening I went online to the Yellowstone Observatory to see what the situation was there. There didn't appear to be anything brewing and I switched next to the Long Valley Caldera Observation site. Same story there and I lastly looked at the Cascadia Observatory aka Plate Boundary Observatory. There are 3 or 4

organizations that use the same name. The official USGS site is the Mt. St. Helen's Observatory.

A Canadian government website had really good information on the Cascadia Subduction zone. Of particular interest was the deep bore core strata. It appears to my bleary eyes that there is some regularity to Cascadia having mammoth earthquakes. I took a quick shower and tumbled into bed, tomorrow would be a long day. Maybe that program on Discovery Channel made a bigger impression on me than I had thought.

Unlike Seth, we didn't have several TV monitors set up in our store. If people wanted to watch TV, they could do it at home. You know if you are looking for something to happen, it will. In 2008, the Olympics in Beijing went off without a hitch, despite many warnings that China would use the opportunity to start WW III. The one that had me worried was North Korea. Those six nation talks? Still trying to determine the ground rules and all the while, North Korea was running their nuclear plants and building more nukes. Was Beijing on our side or the side of the North Koreans? Answer: Beijing is on Beijing's side and couldn't care less. All the while they're doing the peace talks they were building their Navy and buying surplus Russian equipment. Good for sales.

◦

"How much of that beer did we drink?"

"Hangover? We drank a case among the 6 of us. I think the wives only had one apiece so we probably drank 7 each."

"I took 3 Tylenol extra-strength this morning and I certainly hope it is a quiet day."

"Gunny doesn't look any the worse for wear, Evan."

"I think that Jarhead drank my 7th beer and I maybe should tell him thanks."

"Airdale, Jarhead, Swabbie? Why all the names, we're all retired servicemen or veterans, take your pick."

"Do you actually expect me to shoot that cannon you bought?"

"What cannon?"

"The M107."

"I don't care either way, but Gunny can handle it."

"Sauce for the goose, Mr. Saavik."

"What does that have to do with anything?"

“I don’t know. I just liked the line.”

“Get to work.”

◦

Like I said earlier, sales dropped off after Labor Day. What we needed to get them going again was either another hurricane or an early storm in the Northeast. Business was so slow I gave the wives the day off and settled in at the TV in my office to listen to the news. Evan had disposed of the 4 or 5 orders we had over the weekend and he joined me. Gunny was waiting on a customer and discussing the relative advantages, few, and disadvantages, many, of the Mini-14 as a survival weapon. About the only advantage was that it shot the 5.56x45mm ammo and was legal in California. Unlike its big brother, the M14, it got hot and lost accuracy. Gunny was trying to tell the guy how to solve that problem with a new stock.

What the man needed to do was buy the AR15 with the fixed magazine and stop by Gunny’s and pick up a conversion kit. Or, better yet, leave the rifle with Gunny and let him make the conversion. In theory, it couldn’t be done, but have you ever heard the expression, *never say never*? Sacramento had no idea what they were doing; they couldn’t even pass a budget. The Mini-14 was a cute POS firearm. The AC-556 was different, to an extent; it was semi, burst and full-auto. Our conversion kit wasn’t that complex; it was simply a standard full auto lower receiver. Gunny could convert a CA legal to a CA illegal in about 30 seconds.

Yeah, we were breaking the law, but a law like that couldn’t be enforced. Ask San Francisco; they banned everything but slingshots and maybe even those. Did the murder rate go down? Hell no, it went up. Same thing happened in Washington DC because the politicians couldn’t understand that an armed public was a safe/polite public. Hang on a minute; they’re doing an EAS test on TV.

*This is not a test. This is an Emergency Action Notification requested by the White House. All broadcast stations will follow activation procedures in the EAS Operating Handbook for a national level emergency. The President of the United States or his representative will shortly deliver a message over the Emergency Alert System.*

“Oh, oh.”

“Gunny! Lock up and get your butt in here!”

“What’s up?”

“Look.”

*My Fellow Americans,*

*According to NORAD, the United States is under attack from the People's Republic of China. Take cover immediately. If you do not have a suitable shelter, use a community facility.*

*I repeat. This is a nuclear alert of an incoming missile attack. Take cover immediately.*

“Crap!”

“Double Crap!!”

“Triple Crap!!!”

“Are we in agreement?”

“CRAP!”

“Lock up the guns and let's get to the shelter!”

I guess those fellas in Palmdale are on their own. What were their names? Manny, Moe and Jack? They had it right after all, but were a day late. Should have bought some land in Colorado and built a place they called The Ark. As sick and old as they were, nobody would miss them anyway. If they're still alive after, I suppose I'll have to refund their 50% deposit on those shelters. I'd told the contractor to start on the first shelter on Wednesday, September 9th.

We called the wives and told them we were going to shelter at our house and they'd best hurry, the missiles were halfway to the US. Didn't matter, they were all gathered at our house having an early lunch. It was a mad rush to get to our house on the west side, but we made it. We passed the cannons down the ladder and closed the lid to the shelter. I was no more inside than the earthquake hit. Plant 42? Adiós a Los Tres Amigos. Vaya con dios. (The good thing is, they keep resurrecting themselves, or hadn't you noticed?)

“Haven't I seen this movie before?”

“Last time it was the nuclear power plants, Evan.”

“You did this just so I'd have to shoot the cannon.”

“Under the circumstances, I think you'd be glad to have that cannon.”

“What circumstances?”

“The end of civilization as we know it.”

“Hell; that happened when they passed Prop 13.”

“Turn on the TV so we can watch,” Gunny suggested.”

“Watch what?”

“In the movie Dr. Strangelove, there was this conversation between the President and the Ambassador to Russia where the phone melts and squeals. I want to know if LA will squeal when it melts.”

“That was in Fail Safe, not Dr. Strangelove.”

“Whatever, Airdale.”

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The power went out before we found out if LA squealed. That happened right after the earthquake that used to be Los Tres Amigos. Of course the generator kicked right in and we had lights almost immediately. Now, before anyone says anything, if you have a 2-year lapse in trouble, the rule of 3 starts over. This was 1. And what the hell, we had a case of Carlings and our wives to keep us company. The two didn't mix well.

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In life, that's how it will happen. After months, weeks and days of building tension, sooner or later the lid will come off the kettle. For those of us who watch the news on a regular basis, it may or may not come as a surprise. 90% of the time I'm home alone during the day because the wife is somewhere and the daughter is at work. My wheelchair only goes 4-5mph so how far could I get, assuming the battery is charged? The only basement I know of in Palmdale is at the Civic center, 5 miles away. It would be just my luck to have the Chinese attack before they got the shelter installed. USS has a 9-month waiting period and some of the others aren't much faster. If you plan to occupy your shelter on the day after Labor Day 2009, you'd better order it now.

I wonder if all of the squirrels that talked about buying generators managed to get them last fall before Katrina hit? Good, did you buy enough fuel too? Oil and filters? A spare sparkplug? The govment was passing out MREs, aren't they the cat's whisker? Some of them kind of taste like a dead cat, too. Did they ever find FEMA?

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September 9, 2009... Day 1

Well, it finally happened. I started this journal to keep notes in case I decide to write a book someday. As nearly as we can determine, China launched a massive attack on the United States. The signs were probably in the media, but I'd been too busy lately to

notice. There are 6 of us here. Joseph and Rosemary Smith (Joe and Rose), Evan and Marie Mace and Ramon and Judy Gonzales. I thought maybe one of those calderas would blow its top or the Cascadia Subduction Zone would shift, but I never really expected the Chinese to attack.

That's not totally true, but I had expected the attack back in 2006 and again in 2008. Why would they attack in the fall of 2009? Maybe they didn't have a good harvest this past year; I'll have to ask Evan and Gunny if they know. It doesn't really matter why they attacked – they attacked. We're good here in the shelter but I suspect that Palmdale or Edwards took a hit, the ground really shook about the time we came into the shelter. We did manage to get our new rifles down in the shelter, but most of the ammo is in the garage in the toolboxes on the back of our pickup. No worries, mate, I have my gun safe. We can get a good start on killing off the banditos after we get out.

You know, I finally took a good look at Evan's wife Marie and by golly, she does look like Carrie Fisher and has about the build that Carrie had when they made Star Wars. That was a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, almost 30 years. It continued...

It is a dark time for the galaxy.

The once great Jedi Council has fallen. Almost all have been destroyed while some are forced to hide in secret places.

*The Old Republic has collapsed.*

*In its ashes, the reign of Emperor Palpatine has begun. With the aide of the greatest of the Jedi, Anakin Skywalker, now Darth Vader, Palpatine has begun the systematic slaughter of every living Jedi and their children. The bloodline of the Jedi is strong and Palpatine knows their children will be Jedi.*

*But not all the Jedi are gone, merely hidden.*

*Some like the great Jedi Master Yoda and Obi-Wan Kenobi still live, somewhere.*

*Others are waiting and watching, still serving as best they can to free the galaxy and aid the forces of the growing Rebel Alliance.*

*These are the tales of the dark years when the Rebel Alliance was new and the Jedi wait for the Force to deliver the one who will bring new hope to the galaxy.*

*It is a period of civil war. Rebel spaceships, striking from a hidden base, have won their first victory against the evil Galactic Empire.*

*During the battle, rebel spies managed to steal secret plans to the Empire's ultimate*



*weapon, the Death Star, an armored space station with enough power to destroy an entire planet.*

*Pursued by the Empire's sinister agents, Princess Leia races home aboard her starship, custodian of the stolen plans that can save her people and restore freedom to the galaxy.*

Yeah right, somewhere in the Andromeda Galaxy – we're in a hole in the ground on the west side of Lancaster, California. We didn't have any Jedi Knights in the shelter, only 3 tired old soldiers. We didn't have Light Sabers, just rifles and handguns. A few of the grenades, M67, I'd taken from Seth when we'd departed Lake Arrowhead a couple of years back. I'm not sure how many, but not many. The M203s belonged to Seth and we didn't take them or the M16s. We had our own AR15s, but no M16s or M203s.

We're not short on anything at the moment. The propane tank has 4,500-gallons and we have unlimited water and sewage. There's enough food in the shelter for a year, not counting the food in the freezer. Hell, we have everything we need to get by until we run out of propane. The RS15000 would run on either, but I assume the natural gas got cut off about the same time as the electricity because you can tell whether the generator is running on propane or natural gas. It burns anywhere from 1.2 to 2.4gph. Assuming 1.2, we had propane for 3,750 hours and at the other end, 1,875 hours. I sure we were somewhere in the middle and had more than enough if we needed to stay for 100 days.

September 10, 2009... Day 2

There is nothing but static on all of the radios. Seth put the same tricked out Kenwood TS2000X in this shelter, as he had 2 of in his shelter at Arrowhead. I had bought 6 of the Motorola CP200 and all 3 pickups had company owned CM300s. That was the other radio here in the shelter, the 4th CM300 with a power supply to run it on 110 volts. The CS120-12A/MOT11 incorporates an ICT switching power supply factory assembled with the BASE-MOT11 base station cover. The CS120-12A/MOT11 Complete Station provides a sleek, compact mobile radio base station housing, individually customized to the Motorola CM200, CM300 mobile radios.

What about Seth and Naomi? I knew that they had planned on spending the weekend at Arrowhead and maybe a little longer. I just hoped the Jose and the others didn't get in a car and head here, they were probably crispy critters if they did. I think that shelter I put in to pay Seth back probably was his new demo so maybe...

Why is it that women seem to think that they have to use up anything that might spoil right away? Eggs keep, trust me on this. The expiration date on the box can be anywhere from 2 weeks to a month from when you buy them. When they get too old you can tell, the yolks break when you try to turn them. Nope bacon and eggs this morning and she put beans on to soak last night. I'm hoping she'll make chili.

The radiation peaked last night so wherever we got it, was close. The reason I know is that I wasn't satisfied with the CD V-715 and CD V-717, which are limited to 500R/hr. I found and bought an AMP 200 High Range Area Monitor. It had a range to 10,000R/hr. What good did it do to have a meter that maxed out at 500R? Wherever the nuke went off, it was very close. 7 to the 4th was 2,401 and 10 to the 4th was 10,000. 1 ten thousandth of 3,200R was 320mR. We needed that cut down to 100mR/hr to stay on top 24/7.

7 to the 5th was 16,807hr or 700 days and that would drop the radiation to 32mr. I knew the answer was somewhere in between. If 100mR was acceptable we needed a reduction to 0.00003125 of the previous level. I did a spreadsheet and determined that reciprocal of 10 to the 4.5<sup>th</sup> = 0.00003162, close enough =  $1/(10^{4.5})$ . The same spreadsheet revealed that 7 to the 4.5<sup>th</sup> = 6,352.4 hours or 265 days. ( $=7^{4.5}$ ) I never went to college and about the only math I had in high school was algebra. On the other hand this wasn't rocket science and don't let you tell anyone tell you it is. I checked and 3,200 times 0.00003162 = 101mR. The average month is 30.4375 days so 265 = 8.7 months. I checked the supply cabinet for 3 things: deodorant, feminine hygiene and booze.

265 days is 6,360hr and at we had to cut electrical use to an intermittent level to extend the propane from 3,750h to 6,360h. I guessed we could fire it up in the morning and run it for 12 hours, maybe more. One more calculation and I ready to give them the facts of life (bad news). 3,750 was 58% of 6,360 and 58% of 24 was 14 hours a day.

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That high range area monitor everyone said we didn't need shows that we topped out at 3200R/hr. Pay attention, Evan. The radiation in this shelter is normal, but outside you'd die in hours. The limit of radiation a person can handle is 300REM in 120 days, which is an exposure 24/7 of 104mREM/hour. "I dinked around with the 7/10 rule and determined that we're going to need to stay down here 265 days."

"265 days? You'd better repair your calculator, Airdale."

"Sorry Gunny, but I think my math is right. For the moment, let's assume it is. I checked and 7 hours after it peaked, it was down to 320R/hr, so I have a high degree of confidence."

"Then is should be down to normal in no time flat," Rose suggested.

"Rose, the decay is exponential, not linear and slows with the passage of time."

"Speak English, please."

"Fine. At 7 hours the radiation level is 10%. At 7x7 or 49 hours it is at 1%, and at 7x7x7 or 343 hours it's at 0.1%. And, at 7x7x7x7 or 2,401 hours, it's at 0.01%. In terms of our present situation, 10%=320R/hr, 1%=32R/hr, 0.1%=3.2R/hr and 0.01%=320mR/hr."

“But you said the safe level was 104 whatever.”

## In the Aftermath – Chapter 15

“The term I used was millirem. Milli means one thousandth and The Röntgen equivalent man or rem is a unit of radiation dose. It is the product of the absorbed dose in Röntgens (R) and the biological efficiency of the radiation. More precisely, assuming a radiation weighing factor  $rW=1$ , 1 rem equals 1.07185 Röntgen. The conversion factor has been readjusted from 1 to 1.07185 so that 100 rem equal 1 Sievert; the Sievert is the recommended (and in many cases legally prescribed) SI delivered unit. Our equipment all measures Röntgens because most of it is old, but 107mR/hr would be equal to about 100mREM/hr.”

“So, Albert, tell me how you arrived at 265 days.”

“Look at my spreadsheet if you really want to know. The bottom line is we have a bit of a problem.”

“What problem?” Evan didn’t look happy.

“The generator burns 1.2 gallons of propane per hour at 25% power and the tank only holds 4,500-gallons of propane.”

“We’re going to die in the dark!” Marie half screamed.

“One, we’re not going to die and two, we have some backups.”

“What kind of backup?”

“I think he means that battery bank that Seth built under the floor.” Evan suggested.

“Exactly. We can run the air filter off the batteries when the generator is shut down. Without recharging, there’s enough energy in the batteries to run the motor on the air filter for about 350 hours.”

“So when do we get out?”

“May 31st next year.”

“And then what?”

“I have no idea.”

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September 11, 2009... Day 3

*Dear Lord,*

*Here we are in a hole in the ground for the next 262 days. Did mankind displease you so much that this had to happen? We're taking the advice out of the movie and improvising, etc. What are we going to find when we finally get out of this hole? May 31st is late spring so it should be nice, but what kind of devastation has been wrought?*

*We're too old for this stuff, Lord. We aren't youngsters who can have a litter of kids and repopulate the world. Take care of those who aren't as fortunate as we and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.*

*Amen*

We aren't badly off; there are enough of the 120 hours candles in the cabinet to provide a little light when the generator is shut down. I don't intend to keep a daily journal; I think I've changed my mind. Six people in a culvert 10' in diameter and 50' long for 9 months? We're all going to go crazy. Are Seth and Naomi ok? What about Jose and the others?

The TTAPS paper isn't very long and I've gone over it carefully. People didn't seem to believe that Carl Sagan was right in the following years. We were already on the edge of a global climate change because of the greenhouse gasses and the refusal of Washington to get aboard with the Accords. Were the increased storms in the Atlantic a product of the greenhouse gases? Plenty of time to think about the esoteric things, we aren't going anywhere for 9 long months.

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"What's for breakfast?"

"Pancakes."

"No bacon?"

"Only on Sundays, Joe, there isn't that much bacon in the freezer."

"What about lunch?"

"That will be the last of the leftover chili."

"You really got a good do on the chili; feel free to do it anytime."

"With as many beans as we have, I'm glad you said that. Do we have enough Beano?"

"A full case."

“Marie, Judy and I made out a menu. Check it over and let me know if you fellas want to change anything. We can’t really change what we’re going to eat, but we can change when we eat it.”

“A bomb shelter isn’t necessarily the best place to practice democracy, Rose, but I’ll ask.”

The good news was that we had a VCR/DVD player and lots of movies. Over the past couple of years, Rose had purchased a dozen books for me to read that I hadn’t had time to open. One was *The Templar Legacy*, a thriller by Steve Berry in the genre of *The Da Vinci Code*. After breakfast we went over the menus and nobody really cared. One randomly selected supper each week would be steak and baked potatoes just to break the monotony. We three guys decided to save the booze for those meals. As was evident in our earlier experience at Lake Arrowhead, the aftermath of any event has 2 clear and distinct parts. First is the immediate aftermath where you’re doing what it takes to survive, in our case being sheltered for 265 days.

The second part is the aftermath when you’re beyond the immediate needs and are trying to just get along. That was where I had gotten tired of Arrowhead and come back home. That turned out well for them anyway and our being there wouldn’t have made a difference. I was fairly sure the ionization of the atmosphere would clear and I’d be able to hook up with Seth if he were in the shelter at the lake. If Seth equipped the shelter for Jose and the others the same as this shelter was equipped, they’d have a means of communication too. What was that frequency that Seth liked, 144.625? That’s in the 2-meter band, I think. I knew that he also monitored VHF Guard, 121.500 and UHF Guard, 243.000. If I couldn’t raise him on 144.625, I’d try those.

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October 1, 2009... Day 23 (Thursday)

We hooked up with Seth today on VHF Guard and switched to 144.625. It must be a miracle, but Jose and the others are in the demo shelter we built for Seth. It seems that they had been mostly communicating on 10-meters. Everyone was fine and Seth and Naomi were alone in the Lake Arrowhead shelter and Jose and 17 others were crowded into the demo. However, they were going to exit at 100 days, not 265 days. I told them it was either Palmdale or Edwards that got hit, but we didn’t know which.

Seth said that in the week leading up to Labor Day, their business volume was sharply increased but there was nothing on any of the 6 channels to explain what was going on and he was as surprised at the attack as the rest of us. It turns out he had stored most of the M16s at the demo shelter so Jose and the others were well armed.

We agreed to come up on 144.625 at 10am on Saturday mornings from now on until they were out. After we’d see. Seth said to consider moving out of the shelter and come back to Lake Arrowhead.

o

October 3, 2009... Day 25 (Saturday)

Promptly at 10am, we came up on 144.625. It had only been a couple of days since first contact so not much had changed at either of the other shelters. I asked Seth if the offer for us to come to Arrowhead was still open and he said that there hadn't been any hard feelings. I explained the problem we had with having too little propane and he said that we should run the generator full time and if they had to come in wearing radiation suits, they'd refill the tank. But, in his opinion, 320mR/hr wasn't a lot to worry about and we could egress and leave without much problem. The cheers in the shelter at that bit of news practically drowned out the conversation.

He wanted to know how much food and the like we had at the store and I told him there was plenty provided the place hadn't been broken into. I had emulated his approach and we had bars on the windows and grates on the doors, but that wouldn't keep out a determined person. He told me that the likelihood of many survivors in the Antelope Valley was probably remote. And, he went on that anyone who had a shelter was probably well supplied.

"That's good news, no more lights out at 9pm," Gunny observed. "In all truth you should have put in 3 bedrooms instead of one. You're cutting into our sex life here."

"Improvise, Gunny, that's what you're good at," I suggested. "Everyone gets a turn at the bedroom so it's not like we have to practice total celibacy."

I swear, some people would complain if they had a jillion dollars and all the time in the world to go shopping. How much is a jillion? (Words ending in the sound "-illion", most commonly zillion, jillion, gadzillion and gazillion, are often used as fictitious names for an unspecified, large number by analogy to names of large numbers such as million, billion and trillion.) Darned if I know, a lot more than Bill Gates has. There's one Harvard drop out who did very well for himself. Bill Gates lives in a huge earth-sheltered in the side of a hill overlooking Lake Washington in Medina, Washington together with his family. The Gates home, one of the most expensive houses in the world, is a modern 21st century house in the Pacific Lodge style, with classic features such as a large private library with a domed reading room. Electronics are used abundantly; visitors are surveyed upon entrance and given a microchip that sends signals throughout the house to adjust temperature and other conditions according to preset user preferences. According to King county public records, as of 2002, the total assessed value of the property (land and house) is \$113 million, and the annual property tax is just over \$1 million. Also among Gates' private acquisitions is the Codex Leicester, a collection of writings by Leonardo da Vinci, which Gates bought for \$30.8 million at an auction in 1994. (The assessed value of the home is now higher at \$147.5 million.)

Since 2000, Gates' wealth has declined due to a fall in Microsoft's share price and the multi-billion dollar gifts he has made to his charitable foundations. According to a 2004 Forbes magazine article, Gates gave away over \$28 billion to charities from 2000 onwards. Additionally, Gates has not engaged in conspicuous consumption beyond his lavish home, with its gardens and art collection. Contrast this with his former associate Paul Allen, who has followed a perhaps more typical path, owning sports teams, vintage airplanes, and multiple residences. Gates also claimed, in 2005, that he has gone to work every work day since 1975, which in recent years includes both his role at Microsoft, and his leadership position at the Gates Foundation. (He's retired now.)

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October 10, 2009... Day 32 (Saturday)

Today is steak day and we're all saying, *tonight's the night* whether we get the bedroom or not. I might dig out a bottle of the Merlot to go with the steaks. I told Seth this morning that they might have to put on radiation suit and fill our tank earlier than planned. He said it wasn't a problem and they'd venture out at 75 days and fill it up. He had all of his tanks full and the company shelter had a 10,000-gallon tank. There was a delivery truck sitting at his house in Arrowhead with 9,000-gallons of propane he'd picked up the Friday before Labor Day, just on a hunch. Apparently he didn't believe that people would stock up unless something was going to happen or they thought that something was going to happen.

I suppose if you're a millionaire like Seth is, you can afford to have 40,000-gallons of propane stored and another 9,000-gallons standing by for when you run out. No, I'm not envious of his success. If this thing hadn't happened, we'd have gotten there, maybe in 20 years or so. Doesn't matter now, we've just regressed, what, 100+ years? I guess that depends on a lot of things. Where we got hit and by how many weapons. Word back at the beginning of the decade was that China had 400+ nukes. How many had they built in the interim? If they could put a man in orbit, what did that say about their missile building capacity?

"And, while we're at it why? Was Taiwan so important to the United States that we were willing to risk Armageddon just to keep the Chinese divided? It just seems to me that we have bigger concerns. The environmentalists running the county are preventing the people of this great land from utilizing its natural resources. They don't want nuclear energy because of the danger and they don't want us burning hydrocarbons because of the pollution. If they'd spend half the money they're spending on fighting everything on developing alternate sources of power, we wouldn't have a problem. That would put a few lawyers in the bread lines, but so what. 750 lawyers at the bottom of the ocean are what? A good start!

◦

October 17, 2009... Day 39 (Saturday)



You know, I thought the ladies had gotten together and worked out this thing with the bedroom to make allowances for when they were in dispose. Apparently not.

We talked to Seth and Jose this morning and the company shelter seems to be shrinking with time. Jose says that he's gotten to the point where he's passing out tranquilizers to keep a lid on everything. Maybe I should do that. Right now, tempers are on the ragged edge and there are only 6 of us in a shelter the same size as the one Jose has. Man wasn't intended to live in a hole in the ground.

Rose said at breakfast that there was enough steak in the freezer so we could have steak night twice a week from now on. Remember, the freezer in the house is full too and that's a much larger freezer that we can move down to Arrowhead in 61 days. It just occurred to me that the Inland Empire probably got quite a shot of radiation when LA got hit, presuming LA got hit. Chances are that those gangs have been wiped out.

*Chances are 'cause I wear a silly grin  
The moment you come into view  
Chances are you think that I'm in love with you  
Just because my composure sort of slips  
The moment that your lips meet mine  
Chances are you think my heart's your Valentine*

*In the magic of moonlight when I sigh, "Hold me close, dear"  
Chances are you believe the stars that fill the skies are in my eyes*

*Guess you feel you'll always be the one and only one for me  
And if you think you could  
Well, chances are your chances are awfully good*

*Chances are you believe the stars that fill the skies are in my eyes  
Guess you feel you'll always be the one and only one for me  
And if you think you could  
Well, chances are your chances are awfully good*

*The chances are your chances are . . . awfully good*

Talk about a gay caballero. A 1982 article in Us Magazine quotes Mathis as having had a sexual relationship with a male saxophone player; however, despite a multiplicity of other, lengthier articles, no other source documents Mathis as being other than heterosexual. Maybe we got lucky and they nuked San Francisco. BTW, they made 2 movies by that name and the 2nd starred Cesar Romero as the Cisco Kid. Caballero translates to horseman if you're curious. If you go there, Johnny sings excerpts from his songs.

o

October 24, 2009... Day 46 (Saturday)

We're almost halfway there. When we spent 2 weeks in Seth's shelter over at Arrowhead, I thought that was a long time. Seth said that Naomi and he have the tanning booth out and are working on the no-lines tans. I suppose you can do that when you are all alone in a LARGE shelter with your wife. He also said that the weather up there in the mountains is awful. Normally they can expect 80" of snowfall but this year, they have 80" and it's only October 24th. He didn't know if that was a result of the attack or just an un-normally high snowfall. I don't know either; you know how they average these things for Chamber of Commerce websites.

Seth said that Naomi and he would make a run over in 29 days and top off the propane tank, weather permitting. Now is one hell of a time to add that little proviso. I let him know it too. If the generator sputters and runs out of fuel, we'll only have 14 days of battery time before we run out of air and then our goose well and truly cooked. His reply was that he'd try and get out earlier and clear some of the snow.

It's my own damned fault. You know I had this thing all calculated out so we could get by for 265 days, but no, they're going to come to our rescue. I don't even know to an absolute certainty that we have enough propane to go to 75 days. I suppose we could bust out when we don't have any other choice and try to get by. Even if there is snow in the Antelope Valley, We should be able to get somewhere where the radiation level is lower before we reach any kind of exposure limit. I'll have to go back to my spreadsheet and do some more calculations.

I hadn't thought about when day 100 would be, but looking at the spreadsheet I see that that would be right around December 16 or 17. It depends if you're talking inclusive or additive time. 16 is inclusive and 17 is additive. Day 75 is November 27th, 3 days after Thanksgiving. Oh, well. Que sera, sera.

October 31, 2009... Day 53 (Saturday)

Hump Day was this past Wednesday and we're on the downhill side now. Or is that the downhill slide into oblivion? It occurs to me that they shouldn't try to bring us fuel. If they can get here at all, why don't they just go to the store and empty it? If they do have radiation suits, they shouldn't have a problem, no matter how long it takes. When they've got the place gutted, they can come by and let us know and we can risk a little exposure and go back to Arrowhead with them. I explained all of this to Seth and he said that even if they couldn't come, it was a good idea. Surely we could find a snowplow somewhere and force our way to their cabin. I'll tell you one thing; I'll never set foot in another Chinese Restaurant!

We started sorting through what we had and trying to figure out how long it would take to load it aboard the 3 pickups in the garage. Rose wasn't happy when we pulled the SUV out to make room for Gunny's pickup, but hey, the pickup hauls more. The main thing, I think, would be to wear gas masks and those Tyvek suits I have. They would

keep the radiation off our clothing and we could ditch them when we were in a relatively safe area. Tyvek is nothing more than a fancy paper in my mind. DuPont claims it is “made from very fine, high-density polyethylene fibers and Tyvek brand protective material offers all the best characteristics of paper, film and fabric in one material. This unique balance of properties, which cannot be found in any other material, makes Tyvek lightweight yet strong; vapor-permeable, yet water-, chemical-, puncture-, tear- and abrasion-resistant. Tyvek is also low-linting, smooth and opaque.”

They go on to say, “Today, limited-use protective garments and work-wear are among the most important commercial applications to benefit from the unique combination of properties offered by Tyvek. Garments made of Tyvek are either used for hazardous environments or for general, non-hazardous, industrial use. Examples of uses for hazardous environments include protection against water-based acids, bases, salts and splashes of certain liquids, such as pesticides and herbicides. The garments also provide a reliable barrier against exposure to harmful dry particles, such as lead dust, asbestos and particles contaminated with radiation. Non-hazardous, industrial uses include wearing the garments for “dirty jobs” at factories, workshops, engineering plants, farms and construction sites.”

I guess we'll see when we run out of propane.

November 7, 2009... Day 60 (Saturday)

At 2.4gph, we're going to run out at propane at 1,875 hours. 1,875 hours divided by 24 equals 78 days and there is no way, especially since we did some rationing, we're going to run out then. On the other hand, Seth says that it's still snowing at Lake Arrowhead. Gunny has assured me that the Tyvek suits will give us good protection so I told Seth that we were headed his way today. I know it's too early but given the choice, we're going. We all have dosimeters and in the 60 days we've been here, they've not registered one bit of radiation. We were under 2R/hr upstairs and we figured we could get everything here loaded in less than an hour. We were allowing 2 additional hours at the store to get what was important, food and guns, load it on the trailer and swing back and pick up the girls. We could be down 138, hopefully, and at the back road to Lake Arrowhead in another 90 minutes tops. We'd have to find a snowplow and bring the water filled fire extinguishers from the store to wash down. We included that time in the 2 hours.

If ever the expression, ‘the best laid plans’ applied, it was today. There was snow on top of the blast door at the top of the ladder and it took the 3 of us to shove the door open. Managing to get the 3 of us all on the ladder at the same time was an exercise in itself. The hole where the arm to the winch went was full of snow and we had to use a blowtorch on it to put in the arm. Think propane cylinder, here. Think garage door frozen to the ground.

“I'll be a son-of-a-b...”

“Don't say it Gunny, no cussing allowed. You said these Tyvek suits would protect us.”

“I was complaining about the cold, not the radiation. Look at it, it’s zero. I’m cold,” he replied.

“All the more reason to get the stuff moved as fast as we can. We figured an hour for egress time and we’re well into that and have barely started. Get the glow plugs on those engines going and see if they’ll start.”

“Got a can of ether?”

“On the shelf behind you.”

“We should have put those trailers inside at the store.”

“You know what? As I recall, the earthquake hit about the time we were at the bottom of the ladder. It wasn’t an earthquake, but you get my point. If we’d have stopped and done that, we would not have made it.”

“Your Chevy start?”

“It will. It’s gas and it has plenty of juice. Give me a shot of that ether.”

My old Chevy pickup had a straight six engine that Chevy probably stopped making in the ‘70s. As far as that went, the truck was older than its owner. Because we didn’t have a problem with road salt in California and because I ran it through the car wash weekly, just in case, it was sound. It had a 3-speed transmission with the shift on the column. The truck probably cost me more than the original owner, but it was fairly resistant to EMP. I had a set of spare parts if it wasn’t, but remember the garage was a mammoth Faraday cage.

What did I do in the Air Force? As little as possible, especially once I became a Master Sergeant. I had been a crew Chief on a jet at one time, but I picked up more stripes and more or less supervised crew chiefs. I was an avionics man, if you must know. Even was in airframes. Probably wasn’t as glamorous as being a Gunny, but someone has to keep the airframes flying and make sure the avionics work. If you’re sitting on level ground and your artificial horizon is listing 20°, I’m the guy you call, assuming you’re a crew chief. Then I send a Sergeant or an Airman down to swap out the defunct device. It goes to the Avionics repair shop and they either gundock (Navy term) it or repair it. Since I was Air Force, not a Naval Aviator, we repaired the stuff. We had our own slang, Percussive Maintenance - The fine art of whacking the crap out of a \$200,000 inertial navigation unit to get it to work again.

On the other hand it didn’t take too long at the store. We hooked up the trailers and were out of there in an hour and a half. Picked up the wives and headed south to Palmdale. Must have been EAFB that got hit, Palmdale looked fine and radiation there was lower than Lancaster. We stopped just outside of Littlerock, got a radiation reading

and hosed the suits off. We didn't have a snowplow, yet. We ditched the Tyvek and put on parkas. Damn, it was cold.

We picked up a snowplow at a sanding refill station near the bottom of Cajon Pass. The box was empty and Gunny suggested we need the weight. So Evan drove it under the dump whatchamacallit and we loaded it with sand. East out of I-15 was terrible and if we hadn't gotten the sand, we wouldn't have gone anywhere. That truck started awfully easy for a vehicle that had been sitting for 60 days. Whatchamacallit is the generic name for anything you don't know the name of.

The further east we got, the higher we got and the worse the roads became. Obviously someone had plowed some of this road. Maybe they had used this very truck. If that were the case, where was the driver? Some mysteries are never solved, even if Mike Hammer has the case. Whoever it was stopped plowing at Crestline. At Crestline, we had climbed to 4,700 feet. Arrowhead was about 5,600'. We were only about 5 miles from Seth's cabin when we ran out of plowed road at Crestline. Evan stopped the snowplow and came back to my Chevy. Marie was following the snowplow in Evan's pickup and Gunny and Judy we bringing up the rear. Rose was riding with Marie.

"Why did you stop?"

"I'm not sure I can get the snowplow through the snow."

"Did you try?"

"Nope, I didn't want to get the snowplow stuck."

Gunny came forward and asked, "What's the hold up?"

"Gunny that snow is pretty deep," Evan explained.

"You Airdales' are a real pain in the butt. Evan, you drive my pickup and I'll drive the snowplow." (For sure, Evan would have never asked Gunny to drive his pickup.)

I don't know to this day how Gunny managed to force the road open, but he did. Once in a while he had to back up and give it a second run, but 3 hours later we'd covered the 5 miles to Seth and Naomi's cabin. The radiation level there was a comforting 100mR/hr. The house was locked, but Seth kept a key in the soil of a flowerpot. The soil was frozen and I had to use my Leatherman to chip out the key. Once we were in, we unloaded the vehicles in the garage and plugged in the freezers. Gunny went to the basement, opened the medical supply cabinet, released the latch and then used a hammer to pound on the vault door.

"Who's there?"

"Seth, you ugly SOB open the door, we're here."

## In the Aftermath – Chapter 16

Seth released the inside lock and rotated the wheel releasing the locking lugs. He was holding a CD V-715 and gave the 6 of us the once over before inviting us to the shelter.

“Let me check your dosimeters,” Seth urged.

We gave them to him and he looked, only to see that that highest rating was 12R.

“Dude, chill, we’ve been dosing with  $\text{KIO}_3$  for the past day or two. We got what was worth getting from the store and brought all of the food we had there and from the shelter. Have you ever tried to move a 24ft<sup>3</sup> freezer that’s filled with food? We have the other frozen food in boxes, do you have room in your freezer?”

“I think so, ask Naomi. Where is the rest of your stuff?”

“The artillery is in the basement and the food and other things are in your garage. According to our reading the outside radiation level is around 100mR/hr.”

“My CD V-717 has a reading of 124mR/hr.”

“When was the last time you had it calibrated?”

“About 4 years ago.”

“What about your CD V-715?”

“Last year.”

“Use that to check and see what you come up with.”

“Did they hit Palmdale?”

“No signs of damage, it must have been Edwards.”

“Why would they hit there?”

“The dry lakebed is a natural runway that could hold half the planes in the Air Force,” Evan remarked.

Seth’s CD V-715 confirmed our reading of ~100mR/hr. He suggested that we all move into the cabin and they’d vacate the shelter.

“So, if they didn’t take the planes to Edwards, where did they take them, Area 51?”

“I think they took them to AMARC at Davis-Monthan AFB in Arizona.”

“Is that the place they call the bone yard?”

“Yep.”

“I’d better call Jose and see what their situation is.”

“They haven’t killed each other yet?”

“No, but I sense it’s getting close,” Seth smiled.

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As much as Jose and the others wanted to come over to the Lake, there really wasn’t anywhere to put them. Their radiation reading would allow them to leave but to go where? Seth had replaced the building with a Prefab barn build by Castlebrook and kept his horses in the barn. He bought 2 adjacent lots to use as pasture. It wasn’t a pasture; it was more of a big corral. He had a hired man who came in to check on his horses, but they hadn’t had much attention in the past 60 days and it showed. Those animals didn’t look too healthy to me.

They’d worn the grass off the corral since whenever it had been fenced in. If they had radiation poisoning, it had to be mild. Ever the survivalist, Seth said he had read the story on the Internet that suggested wrapping a barn in hay to protect the livestock. He added automatic waterers and an automatic feed system. The animals probably needed what we needed, to be out of the hole and able to move around. We used the snowplow to clear as much of the corral area as we could and let the animals out. We got fresh hay out of the barn loft and put that in the corral along with dumping and refilling the water tank. That didn’t last long once they felt the cold.

“So where are you going to put up Jose and the others?” Gunny asked.

“I’ve had an eye on the land on the other side of the cabin. Guy wanted too much for it so I didn’t make an offer.”

“He from around here?”

“San Diego.”

“I’d be willing to bet the Chinese hit San Diego,” Gunny offered. “What’s the land like?”

“Fairly flat with a fair number of trees.”

“Is there enough room in the basement to put them up while we cleared space for trailer?” Evan asked.

“Travel trailers?”

“Mobile homes.” Gunny gruffed.

“You can’t do much now, the ground is frozen hard.”

“We could go down below, find 5 trailers and tow them back. We could set them along the road until we could clear the land. If they’re set up for bottle gas we can find some bottles to give them heat and we could run extension cords to give them power. We sure as hell can’t put them in tents,” Gunny laid it out.

“What way should I suggest they come?”

“Tell ‘em to take 14 to the Pearblossom Highway exit and come in the same way we came, the roads are open at the moment. They can sleep on the floor until we can find the mobile homes.” I replied.

In truth, they wouldn’t be sleeping in Seth’s basement; it was filled from the floor to the ceiling with food and other supplies. Maybe Jose and the adults were a little too old to enjoy a sleeping bag on the floor like kids did when they had sleepovers, but once we got the trailers up the hill, they’d be okay.

“Do you think Diane is ok?” Rose asked.

“She was ok the last time you talked to her (Labor Day) and Pueblo isn’t a likely target. Besides, there a national forest to the west of Pueblo they could hole up in if Pueblo became untenable. The nearest strike was probably Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs. I don’t believe they could get here if they wanted, given the weather.”

I think I may have mentioned we have 3 grandchildren. Didn’t get to see them often, with Diane and her husband in Pueblo. They wouldn’t be getting any Christmas presents this year. Would that we could, they probably could use a few things from the preparedness store right about now. I knew they had food because I’d drop shipped 5 one-year supplies from Nitro-pak when they had a truck going that way. I knew Fred, Diane’s husband, had a CCW, and assumed he had something more than a handgun.

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“Hola.”

“Have any trouble, Jose?”

“It’s cold.”

“You have snow in Santa Clarita?”



“First time in a while. We spent a day just getting the vehicles winterized before we set out. Some of the guys refill their radiators with water instead of 50-50 and they had a bit of a problem.”

“What did they do?”

“Helped themselves to new vehicles that they could get to start. Where do we sleep?”

“Pull up a floor Jose,” Seth laughed. “Joe and the others were waiting for you to get here before they went down the mountain to get some mobile homes.”

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November 16, 2009, Day 69 (Monday)

We had a brief break in the snow over the weekend and decided to try getting down the mountain today. They’ve been poring over the yellow pages locating mobile home dealers and the thinking is we’ll go for new trailers first and if we can’t find them, good used. Towing one of those things takes a big truck and the only thing we have that is big is the snowplow and that won’t work. There was some discussion that if we stayed here, we should have mobile homes too. It would take a shoehorn to put 5 trailers on the two lots Seth was looking at.

We couldn’t go up the hill, it was too steep, and so we were looking at another pair of empty lots just beyond the first two. If we commandeered 4 lots, we would have breathing room but that was a lot of trees to clear. Up in the Antelope Valley, the land is flat, while here in the Arrowhead region, the only flat thing was the lake. Seth said the best time to cut the trees was in the winter when the sap was down. We added chainsaws, oil and accessories to our shopping list. Seth had one chainsaw with a 16” blade and considering the number of trees we needed to remove, that wouldn’t do at all. Gunny said to add a log splitter to the list as well.

Seth came along and brought his checkbook. We weren’t going to steal unless there was no alternative. I was positive, snicker snicker; he wouldn’t have trouble getting anyone to take his check.

The first dealer we found had 4 singlewides and had set them up for propane. There wasn’t anyone around and the phones were out so we couldn’t call the emergency number on the door. The models had the prices listed so Seth added it up and left the guy a check. They include the stands, don’t they? They did this time. We borrowed two vehicles large enough to tow the trailers and they set out with the first two. We went to a second lot and found 3 more, same story.

At the third and final lot we found several. We had to decide whether to just ‘buy’ one or all of them. They were going to haul more and four a day up the mountain was the limit so we had time to think it over. We went looking for the other things on our shopping list

and when we had what we wanted, drive back up the mountain. You recall that Seth had that old VHF radio from the Sheriff that the reserve officers used. Seth called the dispatcher and talked to the Chief Deputy, bringing him up to date on our acquisitions. He also told the Chief Deputy that if they didn't like his check, he'd redeem it in gold at \$2,000 an ounce.

"Do we want to get one trailer or all five?"

"How much money do you have Seth?"

"Enough. Do you still have the gold I gave you?"

"Cashed it in and used it to start the business."

"So you don't have any gold?"

"I didn't say that. You asked if I still had the gold you gave me and I don't."

"So do you or do you not have some gold?"

"36 ounces divided 6 ways. On the other hand, we have about \$100,000 worth of guns at wholesale."

"How much is retail?"

"Wholesale is about 70% of retail so I'd say about \$143,000."

"How much food did you bring?"

"Three trailers filled to overflowing, including a 24ft<sup>3</sup> freezer filled mostly with meat."

"Did you bring all of your ammo?"

"We brought all of the guns and food, plus as much ammo as we could carry. We can go back when things settle down and get the remainder of the ammo."

"You've done well."

"Up until now we had, yes. However, I see now why you shut down Rim of the World after terrorist attacks. No way to get supplies, is there?"

"Maybe in a year or two yes, but right now, what we have is what we can count on."

Seth had been a good teacher and although we'd departed a bit in what we chose to carry for merchandise, we both knew where we stood. Up to our chins in crap, saying, *don't make a ripple*. He decided to go for the whole ball of wax and we would end up

with 12 trailers and only room for 8. At the moment, it didn't matter because they'd be strung out along the road until we got the lots cleared and leveled. The toilets couldn't be used either, because there was no plumbing hookup. The trailers were nothing more than warm sleeping quarters with beds. Seth had *facilities* in the barn and we used them.

Why we? It wasn't right to put Jose into a trailer and not live in one. He worked for Seth, we didn't. The heaviest extension cords we could find were 10-gauge so that pretty much limited us to 30amps of power, max. We ate our meals in the cabin at the long folding tables the girls set up. The 9 wives took turns determining the menu each day and it was very southern Californian with a mix of Anglo and Méxican food.

It snowed more and the roads closed in and other than cutting and stacking wood, our choices were fairly limited. The trailers all had fireplaces that were mostly for looks but considering the volume of wood we had, they could be a good source of heat. The state of California had never succeeded in killing off the bark beetle or whatever it was killing the trees. If the beetles were anything like cockroaches, the radiation didn't kill them either.

With the passage of time the animals seemed to heal up or recover or whatever it is that horses do besides burn hay. We hung harnesses on them and let them pull logs. We left a few healthy trees to provide a little shade and not leave the lots totally barren. We realized that things were vastly different when none of the radio or TV stations came back on the air. Five months later, during April 2010, it finally appeared that winter was over, for this year. Seth estimated that we'd gotten on the order of 140" of snow, about 12'.

We needed to make a run back up to the Antelope Valley and pick up that last load of ammo. Jose and the others needed to find a dozer and push out the stumps and level the ground so we could set the 8 trailers. Seth needed to find someplace to set the other 4 we'd gotten. Add to that the need to install a septic system for 12 trailers, run water lines and electricity and we had plenty of work to do. We also needed to find enough empty land to put in a large garden.

It appeared that the Sheriff had lost about half of his Department to the war. He'd also lost most of his reserves. Seth was on the radio discussing the possibility of us providing Reserve Deputy Services for Lake Arrowhead. He explained to the Sheriff that all of the men here had prior military experience and the Sheriff explained that none of us had training in law enforcement. I reckon that they were at some sort of an impasse.

"Most of the law we have here is what we make for ourselves," Seth said. "As far as I'm concerned, we should carry open and forget about the laws on the books. I'm going to try one last time to get Penrod to agree to send up a Deputy and give us a night class in the laws we need to know."

"Give him a political contribution, Seth," Jose suggested. "He's an elected official."

“You might try offering to pay for the Deputy’s time,” Gunny suggested.

“Tell him that we have lots of extra ammo,” I suggested.

“Money talks?”

“And bullshit walks,” Gunny laughed.

I know from personal experience that the larger the contribution, the better the attention you get. If the contribution is large enough, the politician gives you what you want and claims credit for the idea. He, or she, does that so no one can claim that the politician was influenced by contributions.

“Classes start next week.”

“How much?”

“\$5,000, 5,000-rounds and we pay the Deputy.”

“What caliber?”

“I didn’t ask, but I think 9mm.” (The correct answer was .40S&W)

“What kind of training?”

“It’s called POST. Once we get 24 hours and pass firearms qualifications, we get the badges and more of the VHF radios. He said it would free up everyone except a Sergeant for the community.”

“I only have about 20 cases of each size, I hope they use the 9mm, I have plenty.”

Authors Note: I was looking for something and ended up re-reading Big John. I wrote that just a year ago. It’s actually not a bad story. The Mountain Man was probably the best of the bunch. If you read Big John, you know he died May 23, 2009, in a landslide. The sign they erected for Jack should have said, “At the bottom of this mountain lies a Hell of a man. Big John”

Lake Arrowhead was served by the Twin Peaks Sheriff’s station, where Jack and Steve had worked. However, the Sheriff thought they could get by with just Reserve Deputies and one Sergeant in Arrowhead. Twin Peaks continues to be among the busiest of county operations covering the unincorporated areas of the San Bernardino Mountains. The station is responsible for the patrol operations covering an area of approximately 340 square miles from Lake Silverwood to Snow Valley. The major communities include Crestline, Lake Arrowhead, and Running Springs. As a well-known resort area the

population can range from 35,000 during the week to over 85,000 during the weekends, before the war.

At the moment, if there were 10,000 people in the Twin Peaks service area, it would be a surprise. To handle Arrowhead and the nearby communities, they only needed the Sergeant on duty and 3 of the Reserve Deputies. The only thing the Sheriff provided them this time around was badges and radios. If you are familiar with the Inland Empire area of California, you know that it is included in 4 counties, Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino. The area has a high number of gang members and an even larger trade in drugs. The LEOs in the area are hard pressed to maintain law and order. Add to that the fact that some of the 4 Sheriff's involved aren't particularly popular with their constituents. Both the Sheriffs of Orange and San Bernardino County have been accused of corruption by Hispanics.

I don't know and I don't care. But, the Orange County Sheriff is in the slam. Sheriff Michael Carona took office in 1999, and soon oversaw the merger of the Orange County Marshal's Department (his former agency) with OCSD. His term brought additional department expansion, including a modernized Katella Facility and a new OCSD Academy in Tustin. Patrol cars were equipped with mobile computers, and anti-terrorism units were formed in response to the events of September 11, 2001. Although he enjoyed an initial surge of popularity due to the department's expert handling of such high-profile cases as the Samantha Runnion abduction and murder, Carona's time in office did not end well. He and former members of his executive staff were indicted on multiple corruption charges in 2007, and he resigned and was convicted in 2008.

From all of the survivalist fiction available, it seems that 3 types of people survive: the lucky, the prepared and the bad guys. Being prepared won't help much if your preparations aren't available. That's why you carry a BOB along everywhere you go. They'll help you get to where your preparations are, if possible. I think perhaps that bad guys survive for one of two reasons, either they were cowards or they weren't bad guys until after. There are 257 stories here, the proclamation says. 98% of them have some bad people in them, so you read the stories and judge for yourself. Travis Dane was a bad character in Under Siege II, but he did get one thing right, *Chance favors the prepared mind*. The originator of the expression was Louis Pasteur who said, "In the field of observation, chance favors only the prepared mind." But you knew that from several of these stories, right?

We didn't want to be cops. No, not even Seth. But if that's what it took to keep ourselves safe in Lake Arrowhead in the summer of 2010, that's what we'd do. With 3 men working the various shifts with the Sheriff's Department, that left 6 to bulldoze the stumps and level the ground. Seth came up with a trencher somewhere and we put in the plumbing for 8 trailers. Given a choice of finding a space for a garden or space to set the other 4 trailers, Seth opted for the former. On the other side of the street there was timber and no houses. We had no idea who owned the land and the Sheriff told Seth that no one could access the property tax rolls or the other records.

As long as we had the dozer anyway, we cleared a large enough area across the road/street for a garden and to put in the other four trailers. One man pushed the stumps of the trees and dragged them to the burn pile where we'd already stacked the small branches. We returned the dozer once the lots were level and used the trencher to put in the lines. Before we had even finished installing the lines for the utilities, Seth showed up with a rototiller and a man to rototill the garden spot. The ladies had the garden installed by the time all 12 trailers were leveled and connected.

These were long days, 8 hours working and 8 hours on Deputy shift. It took us the better part of a month to level all 12 trailers and complete the hook ups. After, with access to an official range, we worked to improve our skills with our weapons. We were still getting evening classes; I suppose it was some sort of continuing education. The Sergeant told me their Agency had transitioned to .40S&W. I had 10 cases of .40S&W and not a bullet more. But with the badges, our weapons were legal.

That crusty old Deputy Sheriff and Gunny got into it immediately. I never heard what the dispute was about, but I'm sure it had something to do with those POST procedures that Gunny thought were ludicrous. The only right the bad guys had, as far as Gunny was concerned, was the right to remain silent. He couldn't see where police work was much different than MOU (Military Operations on Urban Terrain). In the aftermath, Gunny was probably more right than wrong, but that old Sergeant didn't see it that way.

So, Gunny held a separate class covering MOU operations. A few quick points that relate to Military Operations on Urban Terrain:

1. Sniper employment
2. Weapons for MOU
3. Equipment for MOU
4. Use of NOD's
5. Concealed movement
6. Return of the M-113?
7. VHF communications in MOU

1. Sniper employment in the defense is pretty much a no brainer. I would however have the spotter and the sniper both engage targets instead of singly per doctrine as number of targets engaged is more important than accuracy of shots. It would be excellent to plan to have sniper teams as stay behind forces. The psychological and attritional impact of having snipers to the rear and a determined defense to the front would be quite worth the effort of planning the subsequent escape and evasion of the team.

Sniper employment in the offense would be much more difficult to plan, but having a team per company would be a big help, especially in counter sniper operations. They would be constantly on the move, staying just behind the forward element (in the last cleared building), which would reduce their accuracy of the shots and the positions would be ad hoc, but as the ranges are short, it shouldn't be very noticeable.

Countersniper operations would be very difficult to plan into SOP's, but with a sniper team per company and having all three teams in a battalion be constantly aware of each other's location would be a big help. Depending on the battalion's frontage, the three teams may even be able to have interlocking fires to their maximum engagement range. To complement the snipers, they would be patched into the battalion fires net. When enemy snipers begin engaging friendly targets, the friendly snipers could either attempt to engage the OPFor snipers or call on the battalion fires net and get some immediate suppression 81mm or 60mm mortar fire on target (their increased observational ranges would be exceedingly useful). While the indirect fire is in effect, you can make the decision to advance, halt and flank or wait.

2. Weapons and equipment for MOUT is endlessly debated and totally reliant on each mission's parameters. In MOUT, as opposed to SWAT operations, there is no way to have special weapons delivered and it all too often becomes a matter of making do with what you have. To that end, the M16 is a good weapon for MOUT, although the M203 is better, due to the expanded options the 40mm grenade gives you.

The M4 is better than the M16 because it is smaller and the M4 with an M203 mounted is as close to perfect as you are probably going to find. I would advocate giving the M4 to the #1 man in a clearing team. If you have buckshot rounds for the M-203 use them. They will easily penetrate internal walls and doors.

A word of caution with explosive M203 rounds, make sure that the target is beyond the minimum arming distance. Also, the M203 HEDP round is not effective in "opening" reinforced doors. It penetrates, but the blast effect is not sufficient to destroy heavily reinforced doors. It makes good 40mm peep holes though.

When using the M249 SAW try and get the sliding stocks for the weapon, failing that the folding stocks will do. The weapon is a bit long otherwise to be very useful for the actual clearing team. In the front mounting bracket, improvise a carrying handle from a wooden dowel and place it in the bracket sticking out the left side of the weapon. This allows more control of the weapon when fired from the hip or when using a sling. Another item is the 600 round assault fanny pack being marketed by US Cavalry. The item appears to have promise as the rounds are fed directly from the pack to the weapon. If you are wearing the pack bandolier style or perhaps rigged to the sling it might work well.

The M-60 is on the way out, but the E3 model is being used by the Marines. It seems to be a much handier version of the "pig" although from what I have heard, the thinner barrel means less cyclic fire before a barrel change. The forward handgrip seems to be a welcome addition, aiding control, especially in the tight MOUT environment.

The M-240B is truly a monster of a weapon. Its high cyclic rate of fire and mass make it a pain to haul into a city. I would say use it only for support by fire positions, although I have seen both the 60 and the 240 used to clear stairwells. The guns are pointed straight up and a grenade (cooked off) is thrown onto the upper floor's stairwell landing. When the grenade goes off, so do the guns. The assault team assaults up the stairwell

simultaneously. When the team hits the landing the guns stop to allow the team to continue to clear the floor. The concussion, shrapnel and the machineguns are very effective in killing, wounding and scaring whoever happens to be on the upper floor. Both MG's would also be useful for supporting the initial entry into a building. Once the entry point is decided upon, have the MG prep the area for 10 to 20 seconds while the team makes its way to the entry zone. The MG then lifts fire and the entry team cooks off a grenade into the entry area. The explosion is the go signal.

3. Equipment for MOUT has also been heavily debated. I personally have a large dislike for body armor and helmets, but in MOUT I feel that protection is hard enough to come by and every little bit helps. I would prefer Ranger Body Armor, but failing that, PASGT will do. Kevlar helmets are a must. If at all possible, arrange a cache site where units can cache rucks and LBE/LBV's before the assault. Magazines, ammo and frags go in pockets while water consumption is provided for by wearing a CamelBak (2 or 5 quarts). If that is not possible then you will just have to make due with wearing your kit.

Try moving everything to the rear of the LBE/LBV. Keep your hip and front areas as free as possible because so much of your gear will "grab" at everything that comes within a foot of you. That is very bad if you get snagged and you're the #1 or #2 man in a stack. Try and minimize the number and length of your "soldier assistance cords" (dummy cords) on your gear. In MOUT if it's not being used, it's a liability and slowing you down. Try and make an equipment dump to your ruck before the assault.

4. Optics for MOUT is a trouble spot for me currently. I very much like the PVS-7B/PAQ-4C combination for all weapons, but I don't see it working very well for the assault team for the following reasons. If the enemy has NODs the PAQ-4C is easily visible to them. This is not much of a problem for the support by fire due to the amount of accurate fires they can place on target, but is much more of a concern for the actual stack team. Another reason that I am against PVS-7 usage is that they just don't have the stability needed, the lack of peripheral vision and the constant focus adjustments needed in MOUT. I would much rather have white light flashlights, which work with a press trigger. I am fully in favor of using NODs for all aspects of the operation other than the actual clearing of the objective being accomplished with NODs. As soon as the assault is complete, go back to IR.

5. Concealed movement in the city is a major problem currently. Depending on the AO, it may be possible to go through buildings. In WWII, troops were literally going through walls to move from building to building. This would be appropriate in any area where buildings are built against other buildings or where internal walls separate buildings into sections, such as in strip malls or businesses that line the sides of streets. Sledgehammers and pickaxes should be sufficient to build the holes in secured areas. In order to assault through a wall you can use demo or a large direct fire weapon such as a TOW, Dragon or tank main gun. This has the added advantage of killing anyone around the point of entry. Fragmentation grenades taped to a wall should be sufficient for internal walls.



6. As was recently pointed out by DynamicPara the M113 was used to great effect in Vietnam for MOUT. I would hesitate to drag the M113 back into service for use as armored support in MOUT. I would like to see an increase of up-armored HMMWVs in Infantry units. The lightly armored, low profile vehicles are already being used to great effect by the Anti-Tank companies in Infantry Battalions (depending on the MTOE of course). They will be excellent to provide heavy firepower and quick direct fire support in MOUT. The combination of the TOW and either a MK-19 or M-2 .50 cal would be perfect. There are problems with this plan however.

The TOW needs a fairly substantial area to negate back blast (so do recoilless rifles) and the TOW also has a minimum range. Add the fact that the HMMWV can only carry a small number of missiles for the TOW and the actual utility of the HMMWV decreases. The Mk 19, while an excellent weapon just lacks the power necessary to be useful against armored vehicles and its minimum range makes it a poor choice for convoy escort operations, as a close ambush will render the Mk 19 worthless. The .50 caliber HMG is excellent due to its long range, accuracy, good cyclic rate, no minimum range and high ammo count per vehicle. The availability of AP and DP ammo makes the .50 an excellent weapon for MOUT as it is also able to tear through stone and cause structural damage to buildings fairly quickly. If there is no heavy armor threat, the .50 would be an excellent choice to mount on the armored HMMWVs.

The M113 would be viable as a MOUT vehicle, but only if it was Product Improved as per the Israeli Army. Standoff armor screens to defeat single charge HEAT warheads, additional armor plating on the floor for protection from mines, anti-spall lining for the walls and three gun mounts. A combination of .50 calibers and 7.62mm MG's would be most useful. The M113 would also be very handy as a launching platform for volley fired AT-4 or M72 LAWs.

7. Has any thought gone into the communications problems encountered in MOUT? With VHF systems being LOS dependent, they are very quickly degraded in MOUT. The only solutions that I can see would be having Battalion retrans being between the forward units and the TOC. When battalions are fully engaged in MOUT (meaning TOC's and units are in the city environment) perhaps a return to battalion runners will be required?

Another factor with VHF communications is interference from electrical currents. Do high voltage power lines cause comms degradation? If so, would shutting off the power grid be on call or part of the ROE? Along the same lines, has anyone noticed if MOUT would have adverse effects on SLGRs, PLGRs or any of the Force XXI equipment?

## In the Aftermath – Chapter 17

Right, like we had to worry about high power lines. It sounded a whole lot like a lecture the Gunny gave to Marine recruits in AIT or whatever the Corps calls it. Seth and I dealt in preparedness. We didn't sell knowledge, just supplies, unless you wanted to consider the few books we carried. There was more to preparedness than supplies and knowledge; however, you had to be truly prepared. Evan was because he ran 4 days a week and lifted weights the other 3. I figured I got enough exercise lifting boxes and climbing stairs, so I didn't bother. It showed when it came time to clear those trees.

Do you recall that trench that Seth had the fella put in all the way around the compound? He told us it was filled in and when the snow melted, we confirmed that it was. Spread out like we were now, having a trench wouldn't work. We had 8 lots on one side of the road and 4 more across the road. Anyone who passed between us would be caught in a withering crossfire, but we'd probably end up shooting each other. Seth was eyeing 4 more adjoining lots across the road, and if someone didn't show up to claim them, I figured he'd have us clearing them come winter. I was unsure if he was considering 8 more homes or garden space. He should be thinking about more garden space, but he was probably thinking 8 more homes because a couple of years back, we had more guns than people.

When you think of it, we had exactly the same people as we'd had 2 years before, or was that 3? 3, I guess. The 2 kids who had completed high school were attending college in Northridge at CSUN and living at home.

*What Price Glory?* was the title of a Maxwell Anderson play about World War I. It was made into a movie by the same name starring James Cagney, Corinne Calvert and Dan Dailey. In 1918 France, Captain Flagg commands a disreputable company of Marines; his new top sergeant is his old friendly enemy, Quirt. The two men become rivals for the favors of fair innkeeper's daughter Charmaine, but the rivalry goes into reverse when Charmaine proves to be angling for a husband. When the company is ordered to the front, this comedy interlude gives way to the grim realities of war. This version uses almost no dialogue from the original play and was originally intended to be a musical.

If you picked this book up expecting to read about glory, you're in the wrong book section. Look for something by Ned Buntline. He made his heroes larger than life and didn't let the truth get in the way of his storytelling. There is no glamour or glory in war and most definitely not in the aftermath of a terrorist attack or an unexpected attack from an enemy halfway around the world. What you will find instead is a lot of hard work, blisters, fatigue and if you're unlucky, trouble. It was like the war in Iraq, the daughter in law wrote to say, *He is in Iraq, no clue where and has been doing patrols. He is working and not much else. Spence has been working all the time lately. At least that was what he told me when we talked. I don't get many letters or e-mails.* At the moment, the Iraq fatality count was: 2,361.

Patrol: Getting in your up-armored HMMWV and driving around looking for unexploded IEDs, hoping like the dickens you don't find any.

The modern Army was trying to replace the men and women behind the guns with computer chips. They were building guns out of plastic instead of wood and steel. The bullets had batteries and computer chips, and cost \$30 a round. And, that wasn't artillery! When was it, I wonder that America stopped being the home of the brave and the land of the free? Or, was it every really that? As one man said:

*I grew up in the fifties and sixties. In public school, the history of this great country was presented through rose-colored glasses. Not exactly the way it was, but the way it should be. My young chest swelled with pride to be an American.*

*That was over thirty-five years ago. I'm still proud to be an American, but I am infinitely saddened, alarmed, angered, disgusted, embarrassed and left feeling betrayed by the acts of those we have entrusted with the caretaking of our republic and some of the responsibility for those acts must fall on my own shoulders for not performing my duties as a citizen.*

*There are two disturbing trends in this country. Police are becoming more militant and soldiers are being domesticated. This is not good for either group and it's very bad for the citizens and the Republic. The traditional roles of the military and police are so alien to each other that it's the height of folly to believe that one can do the job of the other or employ their techniques without severe damage to themselves and the citizens they serve.*

*The police motto that everyone recalls is 'To Protect and Serve' and that's a darn nice motto. You'll find out in a hurry that they are not obligated to protect you if you ever try to take a police department to court for failure to do so, but most try to protect citizens anyway as best they can within the restraints imposed on them by law.*

*In my dealings with the police to date, including two arrests for DUI, I have always honored the Social Contract by respecting the uniform, and submitting to the authority that the officer wearing it deserves. I have always been treated with respect as a citizen in return. I'm not saying this is everyone's experience. I'm not black or young, but I do maintain the appearance of a sixties throwback which is suspicious to some. I've never been mistreated because I fit a particular 'profile'.*

*But how can one respect the uniform when plainclothes Stormtroopers break down your door in the middle of the night with weapons drawn? The 'War on Drugs', a national disgrace all its own, has given us militarized police forces. Even small cities have SWAT teams now. This is a dangerous development. Which would you rather see coming up your Mayberry driveway: the calm problem-solving Sheriff Andy or an over-excited Deputy Barney in flak jacket with his bullet chambered and ready to fire a warning shot through your liver?*

*Use of overwhelming force to eliminate the threat is the essence of military training. This is completely at odds with the role of a police force, which is to enforce the laws of the land without harming anyone, if possible.*

*Do you think we would have experienced the tragedies of Ruby Ridge and Waco if not for the military solution mindset of the agencies involved? The greatest injustice is that the only people punished in these incidents are the victims. The loose cannon sharpshooter, Lon Horiuchi, who murdered Vicki Weaver at Ruby Ridge was also at Waco and he is still loose today and ready to be used as a cannon again when the agency needs him. The 'only following orders' defense didn't work for the Germans in Nuremberg. Why is it working here? Lon and those who issued the orders should be sharing the same jail cell. I have no sympathy for the Weavers' or the Branch Davidians' philosophy, but when their Rights were trampled, mine were too.*

*Many lesser known incidents have put innocent citizens like Mario Paz, Pedro Oregon Navarro, and Donald Scott in the cemetery.*

*We'd all be better off if the police agencies go back to being peace officers and abandon the warrior concept of law enforcement. Many of us can sleep at night in comfort knowing that the police are out there ready to suffer injury, if necessary, to protect us. The job won't be done until all law-abiding citizens enjoy that comfort.*

*At the same time our police have become more lethal to us, our wayward national leaders have hamstrung our real war fighters with ill-conceived peacekeeping missions in far-flung lands. They've also been busy transforming our forces into a kinder, gentler, more politically correct military.*

*I don't have anything against women in the front lines, but I'm not an expert. My beef is against dropping the training standards. People that can't make the grade physically or mentally, man or woman, do not belong on the front lines. Lives depend on it. I'm sure some women can meet the training requirements without a double standard. I've met more than one I'm sure could beat the stuffing out of me if it came down to a tussle. Training can't be politically correct. It must be tough if the soldier is to survive the horrors of battle. Killing does not come natural to a sane, civilized person. S/he must be broken down mentally and physically, and then built back up into a trained killer. The enemy you meet in the woods isn't going to worry about your 'self-esteem' as s/he cuts your throat.*

*When push comes to shove and our leaders fail us again, it's your neighbors from the heartland who will finish the fight, not those from inside the beltway. Our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers in military service need the best training and equipment we can provide so that as many of them as possible come home to us sound in mind and body.*

*Right now our forces are in the worst condition since the end of the Vietnam War.*

*Every time the President gets caught in his corruption, we have another 'Operation Free Willie' as a diversion. This man has killed more with executive orders than all law-abiding citizens have killed in self-defense combined. These misadventures that have nothing to do with our national interests along with the 'peace dividend' demobilization in the early nineties have bled out our military preparedness in the last decade. Our weapon stocks have been depleted and our disillusioned forces are stationed pell-mell over the globe in peace-keeping roles that they were not trained for and that takes the edge off their ability to carry out their real role of war fighting.*

*When our leaders 'talk the talk', it's the grunt that has to 'walk the walk'. I have never served in the military. I fought my draft board to stay out of Vietnam. I do not regret that. I did not participate in the anti-war protests. I still do not believe in conscription for undeclared wars and 'police actions'. I do regret with shame that I did not support the soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and nurses who did fight that dirty war. I remained neutral towards them. I support them and all veterans now and will for the rest of my life. These are the people that have given up blood and treasure for the rest of us. In the thick of battle they may be fighting for survival only but most initially signed on because of words like 'Duty, Honor, Country'. Their efforts allow us to enjoy the Rights that haven't been stolen from us yet. It's just too bad that not many of the Beltway Brass remember the West Point motto.*

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Did I agree with the guy? Yes and no, I wouldn't go around bragging about not having served in the military. Instead, I would have served and done my part. It isn't fair to ask someone else to protect you if you're not willing to protect him or her. Sometimes, you just have to put your money where your mouth is. He basically lacked a basis for his criticism, having never served. Even that man [who] has killed more with executive orders than all law-abiding citizens have killed in self-defense combined, put on a uniform. So did his principal competitors in the 2004 election.

The man forgot that the law of supply and demand governs us all. There wouldn't be any huge supply of illegal drugs if there were no demand. And who supplies the drugs? The gangs. Hence if we weren't consuming illicit drugs, it follows that the gangs wouldn't exist in their present form. There might still be gangs, but what would they do to support themselves? Have you listened to any rap music lately? It's enough to make a Gunny blush. But, the high school senior who is of Scottish descent who shows up in a kilt isn't allowed to stay unless he changes into pants. The mixed messages within the system are beginning to lose their humor.

"We'll discuss the raid on the gang hangout just as soon as I finish this line..." Say it isn't so. Liar!

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At what point does a story of survival in the aftermath of whatever become a social commentary? It has been a social commentary since it began with, *My boss, Seth, and his...* Like Rodney King didn't say, *Can't we all just get along?* Some authors get piqued when people don't read what they write. If you want to guarantee a following, you have to write pure survivalist fiction, not social commentary!

With us being required to put a third of our men on duty with the Sheriff's Department because of the arrangement Seth worked out with the Sheriff, it was difficult indeed to avoid social commentary. However, we had to survive first if we were to work any kind of job. What is there to say about gardening that you don't already know? You plant the seeds, hoe out the weeds and eventually little plants come up from the ground. When the plants grow up, you harvest either the seeds or the root or some other part, like the leaves.

Seth had more horses than before, but not enough to go around. He had 12 and we needed 24 if everyone was to have a horse to ride. Which was fine except for the fact that the barn only had 12 stalls. Every the businessman, Seth went to Baldwin Lake Stables and suggested that with the war and all, they probably wouldn't get many people coming by to ride horses. 27 gold Eagles later, we had another 12 horses and 12 sets of tack. I suppose we could have just taken the horses, but we all assumed that in time the country would recover, it had before.

When we ran those lines across the road, we just naturally tore it up. That wasn't a big deal, this was California and in California, they would put in a new street one-week and the following week, someone was out with a saw cutting it up. They were more or less unintended speed bumps when we filled them back in. The climate was supposed to be 20 degrees cooler than the Valley, which must have meant that it was very comfortable in the Valley. It was just barely warm enough to grow our crops. We had the very small garden that Seth and Naomi and usually planted and a very large garden across the road that covered 2 lots.

That was a compromise, instead of taking all four lots and putting in 8 additional homes, we talked Seth into taking all 4 lots and putting in 4 homes on one pair and using the other two lots for a garden space. I think the thing that convinced him was the absence of more than 4 more new homes. If a lot is 65'x105' you can calculate that our garden was 130' by 105' and an acre was 43,560ft<sup>2</sup>. So, our garden was about 0.3 acre. We put the rows in a little closer and hoped they weren't too close. We had to grow enough food in that garden to feed the 24 of us for the coming year. We hadn't found it necessary to resort to rustling this year; we found some unattended livestock (cattle) and gave them a new home, in our freezers and corral.

The sap had already started to come up in the trees before we bulldozed them so that made the wood 'wet'. Wet wood is far harder to cut than dry wood so we compromised on that and cut it to length but didn't try to split it. We had wood for heat in the fireplaces, but still need propane for the generators and our appliances. We never once turned

on any of the air conditioners, mainly because the homes didn't have them but also because they weren't needed. We were trying to get by with only running one generator.

Since I had demonstrated some minor math skills, Seth wanted me to figure out how long we could get by on the propane supply we had. In the beginning, there had been ~40,000-gallons in the tanks and 9,000-gallons on the truck, it was a 10,000-gallon tank. The RS15000 used 2.4gph at full power and once we'd all arrived it was pretty much running full power.  $49,000 \div 2.4 = 20,416$  hours  $\div 24 = \sim 850$  days  $\div 30.4375 = \sim 27.94$  months. It took us about 155 days to go through 9,000 gallons and then we refilled the tanks and went looking. That was in May, not February. In the time before we'd arrived, Seth and Naomi had only used a little over 1,700 gallons of propane and it took us a while to get the trailers. Besides, it would have taken too much shoveling to refill the tank before the snow began melting. As long as we could continue to refill the trailer, we had a 16 or 17-month supply of propane.

It was mid-July before we could harvest anything from the garden due to the late spring. The TTAPS group used a one-dimensional radiative-convective model (RCM), which examined how dust and soot produced by various nuclear war scenarios would rise and settle out and affect light absorption and globally averaged temperatures at various levels in a typical vertical column of air above a continent and above an ocean. Their model predicted that even limited nuclear wars could inject enough dust and soot into the stratosphere to adversely affect global climate.

If a completely opaque cloud blanket lasted long enough, surface temperatures on an ocean less planet would eventually descend to a fairly uniform level of about  $-55^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-67^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) worldwide. The TTAPS group predicted that a low of  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-13^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) could be reached in continental interiors within two weeks for their reference 5000-megaton scenario, but cautioned that transfers from the reservoir of latent heat of the sea might reduce the temperature drop by 30-70 percent, especially near coastlines.

MacCracken, using a two-dimensional circulation model, has predicted that average temperatures would not drop lower than about  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $23^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) because of transfers of heat from the oceans. Covey, Schneider and Thompson, of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), using a three-dimensional global circulation model (GCM) have predicted temperature drops to about  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $5^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) in continental interiors of the Northern Hemisphere. Their model also indicates that the blanket might spread worldwide within a few weeks. Similar work in the Soviet Union has been done with similar results.

What would happen in the United States and other nations if there was a distant nuclear war or nuclear winter was triggered deliberately? A preliminary analysis of USDA data indicates that stocks of food in pantries and supermarkets could feed US residents for about 30 days, and stocks in warehouses another 60-90 days. After that, they would have to live on feedstocks, which might last a year with tight rationing. Such feedstocks are not well distributed, and converting them to human consumption would present pro-

cessing problems. Other nations would be in much worse shape. FAO estimates world food reserves at about 33 days now.

A nuclear winter could wipe out all of one year of agricultural production, and severely impair production during the second. Much livestock might not survive, and seed stocks needed for replanting might be lost. It might take up to three years to get agricultural production to a level sufficient to feed everyone now living. By the time it could be done, there would not be nearly as many people to have to feed. The process of desertification might be accelerated and run to completion within a few years, especially if the nuclear summer scenario is valid, which could make modern civilization impossible to sustain, and reduce humanity to scattered bands of nomads. When well-fed people look upon the people suffering from famine in Africa, they could be looking at where they will be some day.

Looking at the period following the nuclear winter, temperatures might increase above normal levels, to four-day highs as much as 12°C above normal extremes. This would be the result of many small contributions to the greenhouse effect, from CO<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>O, O<sub>3</sub>, CH<sub>3</sub> and various aerosols injected into the troposphere and stratosphere, from CO<sub>2</sub> from the decay of dead plant and animal life, and from reduced surface albedo from rapid desertification. Positive and negative feedback factors were considered. The model predicts that the “cold trap,” which prevents H<sub>2</sub>O from entering the stratosphere, will collapse as the stratosphere is heated by the dust and soot, and that convective activity from the oceans and from patchiness in the cloud cover will allow as much as 5x10<sup>14</sup> kg of H<sub>2</sub>O to enter the stratosphere. As the dust and soot clear, the cold trap should drop and most of the H<sub>2</sub>O vapor precipitate, but as much as 5x10<sup>13</sup> kg of H<sub>2</sub>O could remain in the stratosphere, enough to cause a greenhouse warming of the surface of up to 8°C.

The model also predicts that 300 1-megaton deep seabursts could put as much as 5x10<sup>13</sup> kg of H<sub>2</sub>O into the stratosphere, enough to cause about 1-2°C of greenhouse warming. The model predicts about 3°C of heating from increased CO<sub>2</sub> and another 3°C from about 30 other substances, mainly O<sub>3</sub> and various hydrocarbons. These effects are not all additive, so it seems unlikely that warming by more than 12°C would result, but even 6°C would be enough to drastically affect most lifeforms, and 10°C could bring sustained highs fatal to most land life on earth. The model indicates that the worst of this scenario, called the “nuclear summer”, would last until about 3-5 years after the nuclear war, but temperatures elevated by 3-6°C could persist for many decades. Given certain reasonable assumptions, the long-term biological effects of the nuclear summer could be worse than those of the nuclear winter. Transition from the nuclear winter to the nuclear summer would be extremely complex, and the model does not attempt to predict how that might happen, except to suggest that stratospheric H<sub>2</sub>O vapor might accelerate the removal of dust and soot as it precipitates, shortening the nuclear winter somewhat. Conversely, dust and soot might remove more of the H<sub>2</sub>O than the model predicts.

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TTAPS assumed 5,000mT. If we had 1,500mT, I would be not surprised, but shocked. We had layers of protections in the form of THAAD and PAC-3 systems. My best guess was something more on the order of 500mT in the US and a like amount or perhaps a bit more halfway around the world. It was easy to ask, "What kind of mad-man would do such a thing?" but the answer wasn't difficult to determine because we were told in the EAS message who had attacked the US. The question we might never have the answer to was, why? The doctrine of mutually assured destruction was still in place on that day in September right after Labor Day. Back during the Cold War, there had even been one scenario that had the Soviets detonating several hundred mT of nukes over Siberia to intentionally cause a nuclear winter. The Russians had made their own studies and knew all about nuclear winter and that everyone would lose, especially them.

If any one of those forecasters were right, we'd have another very cold winter that was dry followed by a summer with higher than normal temperatures and very little rain. But, these were models and they were global scale models. In the previous disaster, we'd only had 3 nuclear plants with nuclear detonations. It wasn't even a good exercise in comparison to WW III. Moreover, by the first harvest, we had not seen a single federal anyone. We had heard from the Sheriff that they were around, but we had not seen a single one.

I wasn't surprised at that or shocked. Like every American, I had seen the response to Hurricane Katrina and the others in New Orleans and Florida. Florida seemed to do much better getting aid than New Orleans, or hadn't you noticed. Who was the Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, Republican? He was probably more used to hurricanes and better prepared to deal with them, yeah, that's it. They didn't get many hurricanes in Louisiana. And, they didn't want those levees strengthened until after Katrina hit. They blocked every attempt by the Army Corps of Engineers to prepare in advance and then blamed the same Army Corps of Engineers when the levees failed. Would someone please tell that Dr. that FEMA is at Weather Mountain? Well, maybe not but I can tell where they weren't; they weren't anywhere near Lake Arrowhead. I'd like to share this:

*Said the night wind to the little lamb,  
do you see what I see  
Way up in the sky, little lamb,  
do you see what I see  
A star, a star, dancing in the night  
With a tail as big as a kite  
With a tail as big as a kite*

*Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy,  
do you hear what I hear  
Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy,  
do you hear what I hear  
A song, a song, high above the trees  
With a voice as big as the sea*

*With a voice as big as the sea*

*Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king,  
do you know what I know  
In your palace warm, mighty king,  
do you know what I know  
A Child, a Child shivers in the cold  
Let us bring Him silver and gold  
Let us bring Him silver and gold*

*Said the king to the people everywhere,  
listen to what I say  
Pray for peace, people everywhere!  
listen to what I say  
The Child, the Child, sleeping in the night  
He will bring us goodness and light  
He will bring us goodness and light*

## In the Aftermath – Chapter 18

It began to cool off during August and by Labor Day we had a whiff of snow. Not a lot because the relative humidity was way down everywhere. I was beginning to believe that those fellas that developed the climate models knew more than I thought. The crop we got from the garden was far less than expected. I had been warned by the TTAPS study and I encouraged the ladies to plant extra. Was that dumb luck or was I beginning to understand? If I did understand our problem next year would be finding water to quench the thirst of the plants. We could improvise because we were only 3 miles from a large lake. And for fertilizer we could use the manure from the barn. If we spread it early and plowed the garden before winter, it would decompose into humus by spring.

The temperature dropped when the snow came, killing the potato plants and forcing us to dig potatoes. A few more weeks would have given us bigger spuds, but we were happy to have what we got. We bagged them up in gunnysacks and stored them in one of the empty trailers. For the kids who don't know what a gunnysack is, *A gunny sack is a bag made of burlap. Gunny sacks are traditionally used for transporting grains, potatoes, or other agricultural products. Today they are also sometimes used as sandbags for erosion control.* It had nothing to do with where Gunny slept.

We hadn't gained any people, so far. Worse, we had no news other than rumors being spread by ham bands and word of mouth. The Sheriff's Long Range Interagency Communication System was down and he couldn't tell us any more than we could pick up off 10 or 20 meters. Their radios worked fine, but the repeaters weren't working. The VHF radios we had worked fine in Lake Arrowhead, but couldn't reach San Bernardino.

We knew that the weather was bad all over the US and the further north a person went, the worse it became. Two words best described the situation, cold and damp and agricultural production was well below normal. We could pick up the name of a large city or military installation that the Chinese hit, from time to time, and I was slowly making a list. It appeared to me that they'd targeted the largest cities and select military installations. The only real difference between now and a year earlier when we were attacked was that the radiation level was down and the weather was bad.

I realize that I pretty much glossed over summer, but what was there to tell that I hadn't already said? We had what some described as a nuclear winter and a cold wet summer that made doing anything difficult at best. If we didn't have it already or didn't grow it, we couldn't get it. The only exceptions being the livestock I mentioned and more propane. We needed one large generator, but we had 2 RS15000s. If one of those failed for any reason, we had 2 more available, the one in my Lancaster shelter and the one in Seth's company shelter. No outsiders attacked Lake Arrowhead over the course of the summer. If anyone were to start looking for resources, it would be now that we'd harvested the gardens and stocked our freezers with some of the livestock. Cutting up the meat wasn't a problem, we took a portable generator down to Stater Bros and powered up their meat cutting saw and their hamburger grinder. Not all of their shelves are empty, but there isn't anything left you can eat. For a portion of the meat, the assistant manag-

er of the store found a couple of his meat cutters and for another portion of the meat, they were more than happy to cut and wrap our beef. It was easy enough to butcher an extra steer.

The thing that we all miss most is bacon. It isn't that it's all that hard to cure bacon and smoke it, but to do that, you need to find some hogs and we hadn't. If the scenario held and the winter was dry, we'd be able to get out and look for more meat, especially hogs. One of the Stater Bros meat cutters said he had a smoke house and was more than willing to cure and smoke bacon and hams in exchange for a hog.

On the law enforcement side of the equation, we didn't patrol much because fuel was increasingly unavailable. Law enforcement was one of the first things to suffer in the aftermath for several reasons: reduced staff, poor communications and waning fuel supplies. High-speed car chases were a thing of the past, no law enforcement agency wanted to waste the fuel. Justice was quicker these days. If you caught someone with a gun in his/her hand, you gave him/her one chance to drop it. If they didn't, no trial was required, sort of a post-POST approach. With those Colt SAAs, you didn't have to shoot them 10 times to put them down.

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"You say that it's going to be dry this winter, Joe?"

"That's what the people who did the follow-up to the TTAPS Study proposed. Next summer will be hotter and dry. The atmosphere exhausted much of the moisture last winter and this past summer. It didn't get hot enough to evaporate much water and replenish the atmosphere."

"Any long terms expectations?"

"It will get back to normal a little next summer when it is hot and dry. The studies seem to suggest that we'll have increased temperatures for 3-5 years."

"It's like a house of cards the way it all collapsed."

"Many of our major cities were struck, Seth. Utilities are down preventing production and many of the people who used to do the production are dead. There isn't any economy in the classic sense of the word, people with gold and silver buy and other barter. Even if they could extract natural resources, they lack the power to run the refineries."

"Where is FEMA?"

"The government isn't going to be able to bail the country out this time. They're in debt up to their chins and aren't getting any taxes to replenish the supply of money. The Federal Emergency Management Agency was set up to fund disaster cleanups and re-

pairs. Consider the alternative, they could be setting up camps and enslaving the American population.”

“So what are we going to do?” Seth asked.

“*Improvise. Adapt. Overcome,*” Gunny chuckled.

“Words, Gunny, nothing more.” Seth complained.

“The problem with guys like you who never wore the uniform is that they don’t really know what it takes to get by when times are bad, Seth. Yeah, it’s a slogan from a movie, but is it really wrong? As long as we can get propane and keep the generators going, we’ll have electricity. After, we might consider going to Palm Springs and taking down some of those towers and use wind-generated electricity. They must have thousands of those turbines. Or, we could go to MAGTFTC and pull apart that solar panel.”

“What do they call that place?”

“You mean The Stumps, short for 29 Stumps?”

“Yeah, that’s it.”

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When we got busy, I quit writing in my journal. There was enough propane at the terminal to keep us in power for the foreseeable future. We went to Santa Clarita and picked up the generator from Seth’s demo shelter and then up 14 to Lancaster and got the one out of the shelter in our backyard. There was only a little propane in either tank and it wasn’t worth the effort to try and recover it, at the moment. We figured to wait until the following spring to cut the 4’ logs into firewood, they should be dry enough by then.

It gets cold enough in Lake Arrowhead in the winter that you have to heat tape the pipes to keep them from freezing up. We wrapped them with the heat tape that begins to heat as the temperature lowers and then coved the pipes and tape with the foam rolls made specifically for the purpose of insulating pipes. We set the propane furnaces at 55° in the empty trailers. Seth was trying to find families to live in the extra 4 trailers. Thanks to the garden, we could provide food for that many more.

We were right about when there would be trouble. The Sheriff sent a Deputy up to inform our Sergeant that there were roving gangs about. They hadn’t hit the mountain communities, yet; but the Sheriff seemed to think we should keep our guard up. Which got me to thinking, why was the Sheriff still the Sheriff? Where was San Bernardino County finding the money to pay anyone? They got our services for free because by handing us badges, we didn’t have any illegal guns and they had 3 volunteers on duty at all times.

This was far from what I'd ever imagined the world would be like in the aftermath of a serious disaster. I had always thought that the scavengers would come out of the woodwork hit the gun stores and armories first and then take whatever they wanted using those arms as their leverage. On the other hand, during night class for POST, our instructor suggested something quite different. He claimed that with the Inland Empire being directly in the fallout pattern from the hits on LA, many people had died from the radiation. He speculated that people who somehow managed to survive would try to make it on their own and only if that failed would we have any kind of organized effort to steal. Interestingly there were no instructions to shoot looters. Did that mean the Sheriff's Department automatically expected we'd know that? Or, did it mean that the Sheriff expected that the survivors would loot to survive?

Do you know the name O. Henry? He wrote this a long time ago:

*One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.*

*There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.*

*While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad. In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name 'Mr. James Dillingham Young.'*

*The 'Dillingham' had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called 'Jim' and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.*

*Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling – something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.*

*There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.*

*Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.*

*Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Young's in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window someday to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.*

*So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.*

*On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.*

*Where she stopped the sign read: 'Mne. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds.' One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the 'Sofronie.'*

*Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.*

*I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."*

*Down rippled the brown cascade.*

*Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand.*

*Give it to me quick," said Della.*

*"Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.*

*She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a plati-*

*num fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation – as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's.*

*It was like him. Quietness and value – the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.*

*When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends – a mammoth task.*

*Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.*

*“If Jim doesn't kill me,” she said to herself, “before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do--oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty- seven cents?”*

*At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.*

*Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: ‘Please God, make him think I am still pretty.’*

*The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two – and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.*

*Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.*

*Della wriggled off the table and went for him.*

*“Jim, darling,” she cried, “don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out*



*again – you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice – what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."*

*You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.*

*"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"*

*Jim looked about the room curiously.*

*"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.*

*"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you – sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"*

*Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year – what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.*

*Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.*

*"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."*

*White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.*

*For there lay The Combs – the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims – just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.*

*But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"*

*And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"*

*Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.*

*“Isn’t it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You’ll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it.”*

*Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.*

*“Dell,” said he, “let’s put our Christmas presents away and keep ‘em a while. They’re too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on.”*

*The magi, as you know, were wise men – wonderfully wise men – who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.*

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Did you know that most kids these days have never heard of *The Gift of the Magi*? Their gifts were the gift of love. As a child I knew the hair would grow back, but how would Jim ever replace the watch? In that, I missed the point of the story. Because crass commercialism has taken Christ out of Christmas, it is little wonder that they don’t teach the story anymore. They’re turning Christmas into the pagan holiday it once was under the Romans. Happy Holidays, my aching butt! It’s Christmas.

Why my thoughts turned to Christmas in September of 2010, I’ll never know, but this year, we have to start shopping early if there were to be any presents under the tree. We had everything we needed, food shelter and clothing. We had a warm shelter and wood and fuel to heat the place with. We had electricity when most people were without it. We had the means to defend ourselves in the aftermath. What more could a person ask for? Health? Hard work builds the body and we were in good shape, all of us. Companionship? We had our family, save Diane, and she was probably safe in Pueblo. We had good friends and these were people we’d known a while. Gunny was the most recent addition to the group and that had been in 2007, or was it 2008?

Fate had intervened and the nuke hit Edwards, not Palmdale. I knew what the future would bring, more work and possibly even trouble from one of the roving gangs. You can prepare, but you can never predict the outcome. What if that far off enemy target

someplace near your shelter and the CEP brought the weapon down on your shelter? You'd never even know it. There is a new lexicon in the jargon these days, prepare and after, improvise, adapt and overcome.

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